

THE SONG OF TIADATHA



Captain Owen Rutter



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THE SONG OF TIADATHA

RHYMES OF A RED-CROSS MAN

BY ROBERT W. SERVICE

Cloth.

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"It is the great merit of Mr. Service's verses that they are literally alive with the stress and joy and agony and hardship that make up life out in the battle zone. He has never written better than in this book, and that is saying a great deal."—BOOKMAN.

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD. LONDON

THE SONG OF TIADATHA

By CAPTAIN
OWEN RUTTER ('KLIP-KLIP')

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PR
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TO

COLONEL "BONNY" ROCKE, C.M.G.

WHO HAS TURNED MORE THAN ONE

TIRED ARTHUR INTO A SOLDIER

THIS SLIGHT RECORD OF ADVENTURE IS DEDICATED

IN MEMORY OF MANY DAYS (PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT)

SPENT UNDER HIS COMMAND IN WILTSHIRE AND

IN FRANCE, AND UPON THE BARREN

HILLS OF MACEDONIA

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INTRODUCTION

THE SONG OF TIADATHA first made its appearance in the columns of *The Orient Weekly*, and by the time two or three instalments had appeared requests came from every quarter asking that the fascinating story of "Tired Arthur" should be completed as soon as possible, and issued in book form for the further delight of its many admirers. This was easier asked for than complied with. All sorts of urgent messages were sent to the Author, insisting on the fame that was awaiting him, but he was extremely busy with his military duties up on the Doiran Front, and in the intervals of raiding the Bulgars his serio-comic muse did not flourish too easily,

But bit by bit the pleasing fabric of THE SONG OF TIADATHA was built up, and we are happy to be able to present it at last in complete form. THE SONG OF TIADATHA is unique in war literature. It tells a story which is common to very many

members of the Salonica Army, and tells it in a fashion which is a most happy blend of descriptive realism, humour and sentiment. Longfellow's metre has often been copied before, but I think never so well as this and certainly never with such happy results. Floating as gently along as Hiawatha in his canoe, we follow Tiadatha's adventures from the day when he ceases to be a "nut" in St. James's Street, joins up, and goes to France; we come with him to Macedonia, and accompany him as he does the hectic round of Salonica's dubious amusements; watch him building his dug-out up on the Doiran Front; share his feverish activities during the nightmare experience of the Great Fire; attack the frowning Bulgar mountains in his company; and finally, with much good work well done, go back to England with him on leave—and look enviously on as he takes to his arms again his green-eyed Phyllis.

There is something in THE SONG OF TIADATHA that all of us have experienced. That is one reason why it appeals so strongly to the B.S.F. But another reason is that THE SONG OF TIADATHA is something absolutely our own. Nobody can appreciate it to the full who has not belonged to the great family of the B.S.F. And as you men of that Army have had trials which have been peculiarly your own, so it is right that you

should have a pleasure in which nobody outside the family can fully participate.

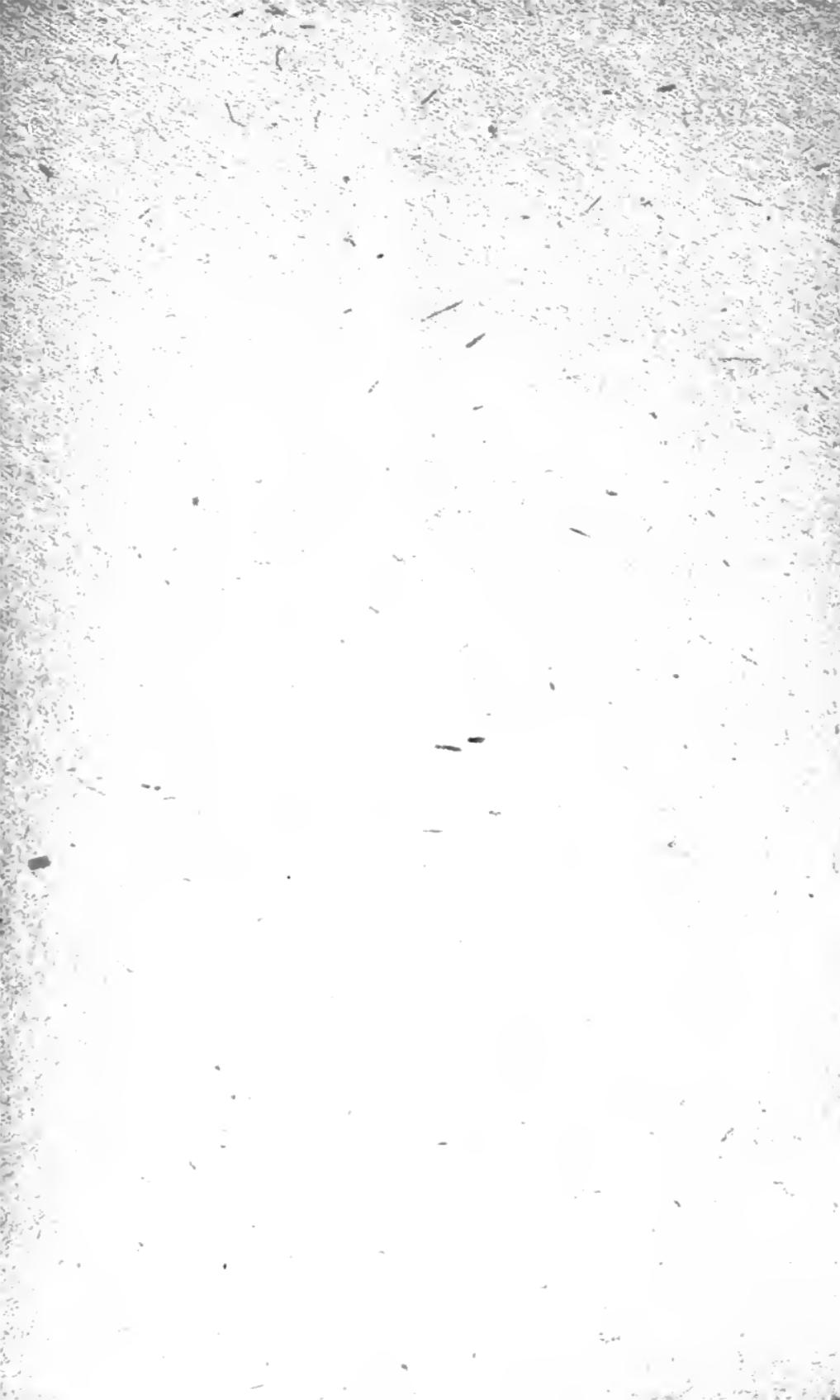
H. C. OWEN.

SALONICA,

January 1, 1919.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE FIRST BRITISH EDITION

As Mr. H. C. Owen (the Editor of the *Balkan News*) says above, THE SONG OF TIADATHA tells a story which is common to very many members of the Salonica Army; he says further that "nobody can appreciate it to the full who has not belonged to the great family of the B.S.F." But we venture to think that it is a story which cannot properly be regarded as of local significance and interest merely. It typifies experiences which innumerable soldiers must, in their various ways, have undergone throughout the various theatres of the war. Thus THE SONG OF TIADATHA may be regarded in a sense as a little epic of the Great War, and, though it may find special appreciation among the great family of the B.S.F., its qualities are such that it may be expected to find appreciation among the great family of readers generally, soldiers and civilians alike.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	7
I. THE JOINING OF TIADATHA	13
II. THE TRAINING OF TIADATHA	18
III. TIADATHA'S WOOING	23
IV. TIADATHA'S DEPARTURE	29
V. TIADATHA IN FRANCE	35
VI. TIADATHA'S JOURNEY	42
VII. TIADATHA AT SALONICA	47
VIII. A DAY IN SALONIQUE	53
IX. UP THE LINE	60
X. CARRYING ON	66
XI. TIADATHA'S DUG-OUT	73
XII. TIADATHA'S BATTLE	80
XIII. TIADATHA IN HOSPITAL	88
XIV. THE FIRE	96
XV. SNEVCE WAY	108
XVI. A STUNT AT DAWN	116
XVII. LEAVE TO ENGLAND	123
XVIII. HOME AT LAST	132



THE SONG OF TIADATHA

CHAPTER I

THE JOINING OF TIADATHA

SHOULD you question, should you ask me
Whence this song of Tiadatha ?
Who on earth was Tiadatha ?
I should answer, I should tell you,
He was what we call a filbert,
Youth of two and twenty summers.
You could see him any morning
In July of 1914,
Strolling slowly down St. James's
From his comfy flat in Duke Street.
Little recked he of in those days,
Save of socks and ties and hair-wash,
Girls and motor-cars and suppers ;
Little suppers at the Carlton,
Little teas at Rumpelmeyer's,
Little week-ends down at Skindle's ;
Troc and Cri and Murray's knew him,
And the Piccadilly grill-room,

And he used to dance at Ciro's
With the fairies from the chorus.
There were many Tired Arthurs
In July of 1914.

Then came war, and Tiadatha
Read his papers every morning,
Read the posters on the hoardings,
Read "Your King and Country want you."
"I must go," said Tiadatha,
Toying with his devilled kidneys,
"Do my bit and join the Army."
So he hunted up a great-aunt,
Who knew someone in the Service,
Found himself in time gazetted
To a temporary commission
In the 14th Royal Dudshires.

Straightway Tiadatha hied him
To the shop of Bope and Pradley,
Having seen their thrilling adverts.
In the Tube and in the *Tatler*.
Pradley sold him all he needed,
Bope a lot of things he didn't,
Pressed upon him socks and puttees,
Haversacks and water-bottles.
Made him tunics for the winter,
Made him tunics for the summer,

And some very baggy breeches.
There he chose his cap of khaki,
Very light and very floppy
(Rather like a tam-o'-shanter),
And a supple chestnut Sam Browne,
Quite a pleasant thing in Sam Brownes,
Rather new but very supple.

Many pounds spent Tiadatha
On valises, baths and camp beds,
Spent on wash-hand stands and kit bags.
Macs and British warms and great-coats,
And a gent's complete revolver.
Then he went to Piccadilly,
Mr. Wing, of Piccadilly,
Where he ordered ties and shirtings,
Cream and coffee ties and shirtings,
Ordered socks and underclothing,
Putting down the lot to Father.
Compass, torch and boots and glasses
All of these sought Tiadatha ;
All day boys with loads were streaming
To and from the flat in Duke Street,
Like a chain of ants hard at it
Storing rations for the winter.

“ One thing more,” cried Tiadatha,
“ One thing more ere I am perfect.

I must have a sword to carry
In a jolly leather scabbard."
So he called the son of Wilkin,
Wilkin's son who dwelt in Pall Mall,
Bade him make a sword and scabbard.
And the mighty son of Wilkin
Made a sword for Tiadatha,
From the truest steel he made it,
Slim and slender as a maiden,
Sharper than a safety razor,
Sighed a little as he made it,
Knowing well that Tiadatha
Probably would never use it.

Then at last my Tiadatha
Sallied forth to join the Dudshires,
Dressed in khaki, quite a soldier,
Floppy cap and baggy breeches,
Round his waist the supple Sam Browne,
At his side the sword and scabbard,
Took salutes from private soldiers
And saluted Sergeant-Majors
(Who were very much embarrassed),
And reported at Headquarters
Of the 14th Royal Dudshires.

Shady waters of a river,
Feels when by some turn of fortune
He gets plopped into a cistern
At a comic dime museum,
Finds himself among strange fishes,
Finds his happy freedom vanished,
Even so felt Tiadatha
On the day he joined the Dudshires.
But he pulled himself together,
Found the Adjutant, saluted,
Saying briefly, "Please I've come, sir."
Such was Tiadatha's joining.

CHAPTER II

THE TRAINING OF TIADATHA

TWO long months spent Tiadatha
On a Barrack Square in Dudshire
Learning how to be a soldier.
Laid aside the sword and scabbard
Fashioned by the son of Wilkin,
Only routed out on Sundays,
For the Church Parades on Sundays.
In their stead he bore a rifle,
Just a rifle and a bayonet,
Learnt to slope his arms by numbers
Learnt to order arms by numbers,
Learnt the rite of fixing bayonets,
Harkening to the Sergeant-Major,
Very gruff and fierce and warlike.

Then came P.T. with its press-ups,
Stretching slowly (on the hands down),
Slowly, slowly bending downwards ;
After seven Tiadatha
Lay and gasped upon his tummy.

Then the muscle exercises,
Ghastly muscle exercises,
Standing with the blinking rifle
Two full minutes at the shoulder.

In those days too Tiadatha
Learnt the mysteries of "Form Fours,"
And evolved a simpler method,
Which he showed the Sergeant-Major.
"No, sir," said the Sergeant-Major,
Looking very fierce and warlike,
"Mine's the only way it's done, sir,
Mine's the way the Colonel wants it."
"Narrow minds," cried Tiadatha,
"Hidebound hearts," he cried in dudgeon,
"Mine's as good a way as his is,
Mine is better than the Colonel's.
I shall tell him so to-morrow,
Tell him on parade to-morrow."

On the morrow came the Colonel,
Came the Colonel of the Dudshires,
Stern and terrible in aspect,
With his usual morning liver;
Ran his eye along the front rank,
Ran his eye along the rear rank,
Till he came to Tiadatha.

"There's an officer," he shouted,
Bellowed forth in voice of thunder,
"Holding up his blasted rifle
Like a something something pitchfork."
After which poor Tiadatha
Thought perhaps he wouldn't mention
Forming fours and simpler methods.

Had you asked my Tiadatha
If he loved those days of training,
Loved the sloping arms by numbers,
Loved the musketry and marching,
And the press-ups and the shouting,
He would just have smiled and told you
That, until he joined the Army,
He had not the least conception
Life could be so damned unpleasant.
But it made him much less nut-like,
Made him straighter-backed and broader,
Clear of eye, with muscles on him
Like a strong man in a circus.

And in time he formed new friendships
With his brothers in the Dudshires.
They were drawn from many countries,
Many places and professions,
From the public schools of England,

From Ceylon and from Rhodesia,
Canada, the Coast and China ;
Actors, business men and lawyers,
And a planter from Malacca
With a mighty thirst for whisky.

As a village shop in Dudshire
Has its wonderful collection,
Miscellaneous assortment
Of all things that you could think of,
And a lot of things you couldn't—
Oranges and postal orders,
Bullseyes, buckets, belts and bacon,
Shoes and soap and writing-paper—
Even such a strange collection
Tiadatha found his brothers
In the 14th Royal Dudshires.
Yet they fitted in their places
Like the pieces of a puzzle,
Pieces of a jig-saw puzzle,
And they talked on common topics,
Motor-bikes and leave and press-ups.
So among them Tiadatha
Lived and laughed and learnt and grumbled,
Shared their tents and huts and billets,
Shared the mud and snow and sunshine,
Shared the long route marches with them,
And at night foregathered with them
Over port and whisky sodas.

Came a day when Tiadatha
Handed in at last his rifle,
And as a Platoon Commander,
Found out what commanders feel like
(Sort of super-idiot feeling)
When they shout "Right Turn" for "Left
Turn,"
When they loudly bawl out "Eyes Left"
For a General on their right hand.
Daily too upon parade he
Looked at his platoon's cap badges,
Saw its every button polished,
Learnt that private soldiers' hair grows
Fast as cress upon a blanket.
Many hours he spent in drilling,
Spent in Foot and Kit inspections,
Spent in strenuous Brigade Days
On the windy downs of Dudshire,
Finding (as he'd long suspected)
That a subaltern's existence
Isn't quite all beer and skittles.
Such was Tiadatha's training.

CHAPTER III

TIADATHA'S WOOING

DURING all the months of training,
Months of waiting down in Dudshire,
Often sighed my Tiadatha
For his haunts about St. James's,
Missed his little flat in Duke Street,
Missed his morning devilled kidneys.
But at times he snatched a week-end
From the joys of bombs and bayonets,
Put his name down in the leave book
And went crashing up to London.

In the East they tell a legend
Of the crocodiles that dwell there,
Basking in the tropic sunshine
On the mudflats of the rivers.
Every night (so natives tell you)
All the crocodiles will vanish
To the palace of their rajah

Underneath the winding rivers ;
There each crocodile his skin doffs,
Hangs it in the palace courtyard
And becomes a human being.

Even so my Tiadatha
Doffed his tunic for those week-ends,
Hung his soldier's mental skin up,
Put off thoughts of bomb and bayonet,
Turning to the haunts that knew him
In July of 1914.

Thus fared he through months of waiting
Till at last there came the tidings :
" We go out to France in three weeks,
Final leave begins on Friday."
So it chanced that Tiadatha
Spent his final leave in London,
And one night looked in at Murray's
With a brother from the Dudshires.
" I have got to meet my sister,"
Said his brother from the Dudshires,
" Meet my little sister Phyllis,
Come and dance a fox-trot with her."

Rather bored felt Tiadatha,
Thinking how he'd asked to supper
Cloe Goldilocks of Daly's,

Bored until he saw this Phyllis,
Heard his friend say, "Here's my sister;
Phyllis, this is Tiadatha."

Fair was she and slim and slender,
Like an April day her eyes were,
Green and grey as days in April.
And her mouth curved like a rose leaf,
And her smile was like the sunshine
Playing on the Thames at Chelsea
Early on a summer morning.
Slim and slender as his sword was.

Tiadatha looked and wondered,
Found her different from the others,
Asked her if she'd dance the next one,
Vowed he'd dodge the gilt-haired Cloe ;
Then the band struck up a rag-time,
Noisy, thrilling, banging rag-time,
And he steered her through the mazes
Of that crowded floor at Murray's.
In and out among the couples
Tightly in his arms he bore her
(Very careful not to bump her),
Dipping, whirling, swinging, swaying,
To the rhythm of the music,
To that syncopated music
Of the darkie band at Murray's.

Then they supped and danced a fox-trot,
Careless, fascinating fox-trot,
Danced a waltz, another rag-time ;
Till the darkie band departed,
Till the waiters all grew restive
Phyllis danced with Tiadatha.
Brother Bill had hied him homewards
Rather peevish, very sleepy,
Saying " See her home to Sloane Street,"
To the joy of Tiadatha.

So he put her in a taxi,
Saying to the driver gently,
" No, old top, not straight to Sloane Street,"
Hopped in too and looked at Phyllis,
Found his heart was working faster
Than a Lewis gun in action.

Very lovely was the morning
As they drove down Piccadilly,
Pink and grey like parrots' feathers ;
And the watered streets were gleaming
Still and silent in the sunlight,
None abroad and nothing stirring
Save a sparrow in the Green Park,
Save a reveller returning ;
Save a loaded wagon bearing
Brussels sprouts to Covent Garden.

“Phyllis, dear,” said Tiadatha,
“No one ever danced like you do,
No one ever smiled like you do,
No one ever made my heart beat
In the way that you have made it.
Fate is cruel to let me find you
On this last of final leave days.”

Phyllis sighed and whispered softly,
“Better to have found each other
Even for a little hour.
All the same, I hate you going ;
I shall miss you, Tiadatha.”

“Some day I will come back, Phyllis,
We will dance again together.
Will you be my partner always,
Will you wait, my lovely Phyllis ? ”
Not a word she answered, only
Moved her hand in his a little,
And straightway my Tiadatha
Took her in his arms and kissed her.

* * * * *

“ ‘Ere we are, sir,” said the driver.
“Bin ‘ere this last twenty minutes,”
Growled the driver of the taxi,
Rather anxious for his breakfast.

So they parted ; Tiadatha
Watched the front door close behind her,
Gave the driver half-a-sovereign,
Strolled back slowly to St. James !

Thus was Tiadatha's wooing,
Thus he parted from his Phyllis.
You will say 'twas not idyllic,
Wooing in a London taxi,
Parting on a London pavement.
Yet romance is where your heart is
Idylls what you like to make the .
Anyone can be romantic
In a punt beneath the willows ;
Anyone can be romantic
In a woodland dell at sunset.
But if punt and dell are absent -
And you want to tell your Phyllis,
Want to tell her how you love her,
Be a man like Tiadatha,
Take her in your arms and tell her
Even in a London taxi.

CHAPTER IV

TIADATHA'S DEPARTURE

ON a day in late September,
In September 1915,
Marched the 14th Royal Dudshires
For the last time past their Genera,
Ere they sailed to fight the Germans.
After which my Tiadatha
Sorted out the things he needed,
All the things he thought he needed,
For a life on active service,
Active service in the trenches.

“Thirty-five pounds, Tiadatha,”
Said his Company Commander,
Sitting on a mighty bundle,
“Not another ounce, remember.”
“Thirty-five pounds,” said the T.O.
“Not another ounce, remember,
Or I put the whole darned lot off.”
All day long he heard their warnings,
In his dreams he heard their warnings,
“Thirty-five pounds, Tiadatha.”

Ruefully he left behind him
Presents from his fond relations—
Cooking stoves and writing cases,
Body shields and balaclavas,
Medicine chests and many mittens,
Also twenty-seven mufflers
Knitted by some loving cousins,
And a vast supply of Horlick's.

Even then it looked too bulky,
That valise of Tiadatha's,
Very big and fat and bulging,
Though he'd only crammed inside it
Just the barest necessities
For a life on active service—
And a pair of silk pyjamas,
Just one pair of pink pyjamas,
Souvenirs of Piccadilly.

Then he helped his batman raise it,
Watched his batman stagger with it
To the laden limbered wagon.
" Much too heavy," said the T.O.
Pointing an accusing finger.
" Did I not say thirty-five pounds ?
This is over sixty-seven."

So they took it round the corner
(Tiadatha and his batman),
And with superhuman efforts
Tightened up the straps a little,
Hoisted it upon the limber
When the T.O. wasn't looking.

On the next day Tiadatha
Got his gent.'s complete equipment,
Messed about with straps and buckles,
Set upon it his revolver,
Ammunition-pouch and compass,
Stuffed the pack to overflowing,
With some little things he couldn't;
Really couldn't leave behind him.
Not a man in all the Dudshires
Had a pack like Tiadatha's ;
When he put it on he tottered
As a very strong man totters
Carrying a grand piano,
As a railway porter totters
Humping trunks of Yankee travellers.
" This is War," said Tiadatha,
As he went on the parade ground
For his final march in England.

Very cheerful were the Dudshires
As they swung along the high road,

Marching to the railway station,
Off to do a job for England,
Singing all the songs of those days,
Playing "Keep the Home Fires Burning"
On their fourpenny mouth-organs.
And the simple folk of Dudshire
Turned out in their scores to see them,
Smiling through their tears they watched
them.

Standing in the cottage doorways,
Waving from the cottage windows.
As he sang each soldier wondered
How long it would be, before he
Saw again those smiling faces,
Little knowing how he'd miss them,
Sigh for all those smiling faces,
For the sunny downs of Dudshire,
For the mellow ale of Dudshire,
In the days that were to follow.
Then they reached the railway station,
Journeyed down by train to Folkestone,
And embarked upon their transport
For the land of war and trenches.

Should you ask me of their sailing,
Ask me if the bands were playing,
Buglers blowing, bagpipes wailing,
Sirens tooting, people cheering,

If the Quay were thronged with watchers
Waving to their sons and husbands,
Blowing kisses to their sweethearts,
And the soldiers on the troopship
Lining all along the taffrail,
Singing loudly "Rule Britannia"
(You have very likely heard it,
The Departure of the Troopship,
On some gramophone or other),
I should make reply and tell you.
There was not a band or bugle,
Not a single watcher waving,
Not a single soldier singing
On the night that Tiadatha
Sailed for France upon a troopship.
Silently they left the station,
Silently embarked at midnight,
No one talking, no one smoking,
Not a sound except the tramping
Of the men along the gangway,
And the gurgling water-bottles,
And the rattle of equipment.

Like a shadow lay the transport,
Like a ghost she cast her moorings,
And with her destroyer escort
Steamed away into the darkness.

“ Better thus,” mused Tiadatha,
As he watched the inky outline
Of the cliffs of England fading,
Thinking of his green-eyed Phyllis,
Thinking hard of Piccadilly,
Thinking of his loves and longings
Set within the four-mile radius.

“ Better thus,” thought Tiadatha,
Went below and had a whisky
With his Company Commander,
Made a pillow of his life-belt,
Fell into a troubled slumber
Till the shores of France were sighted.

CHAPTER V

TIADATHA IN FRANCE

TIADATHA had a notion,

All the Dudshires had a notion
That in France they'd drop for ever
Musketry and long route marches,
Drop the sloping arms by numbers,
Drop the everlasting press-ups,
As a steamer drops her pilot
When she reaches open waters.
Yet the Dudshires' recollection
Of those days in France is mainly
One big blur of mingled P.T.,
Arm drill, long straight roads and marches.

Many miles my Tiadatha
Tramped along those endless highways.
Endless as a winter's evening,
Straighter than the wife of Cæsar,
Fringed with trees all apple-laden,
Apple-laden till the Dudshires
Had a short fall-out beneath them.

Many villages they came to,
Villages as like as marbles,
With a little church, a duck pond,
And a local pub, which furnished
Nothing in the world but *vin rouge*
(“ Two *vins*, please, Miss,” called the Dudshires),
Beer as thin as tissue paper,
And (sometimes) a drop of cognac :
There were bars in which the soldiers
Slept on straw and ate and grumbled,
Shaved and smoked and wrote their letters—
Tiadatha censored hundreds.
There were cottages that straggled
(Like some weary soldiers marching)
Down a very muddy main street ;
In those cottages dwelt old men,
Women, children and some cripples,
But no men with able bodies,
Not a slacker, not a shirker.

Here it was that Tiadatha
Slept upon the chilly stone floor,
Or (if fate were feeling kinder)
On a mighty feather mattress,
Ate his dinner in the kitchen,
Drinking down great draughts of cider,
Talking in his very vile French
To Madame, his kindly hostess,

Wrinkled as a russet apple.
By the fire he wrote his letters,
Wrote and told his green-eyed Phyllis
How he missed her every minute,
Thanked her for the cake she'd sent him,
Hinted that he'd like another.

Little dreamed my Tiadatha
How he'd miss the cottage kitchen,
Miss the long French loaves and butter,
And his kindly wrinkled hostess,
In the days that were to follow.

After several weeks of wandering,
From one village to another,
From one billet to another,
Came a sojourn in the trenches
Just to see what trenches feel like.

On the day that Tiadatha
Sallied forth into the trenches,
Wondrously was he accoutred.
On his head a cap with ear-flaps
(Very like a third-rate footpad's),
On his feet a pair of waders,
Reaching upwards to his tummy.
Many bags of tricks he carried,

Compass, map case and revolver,
Respirator, two trench daggers,
And his pack was great with torches,
Tommy's cookers, iron rations,
And a box of ear defenders,
Present from his Aunt Matilda.

As they saw him in the distance,
Bearing down upon their billets,
His platoon turned out in wonder,
Watched the apparition coming,
Speculated who it might be,
Freely making bets about it,
Till they found it was none other
Than their own platoon commander.

Then he trudged off to the trenches,
Followed many muddy C.T.s,
Till at last he reached a dug-out,
And "reported for instruction"
To the hero who commanded
That small sector of the trenches.
This stout hero and his fellows
Made my Tiadatha welcome,
Straightway plying him with whisky,
Saying, "Won't you take your kit off?
All you'll need up here's a Sam Browne."

Then his host expounded to him
Many mysteries of warfare,
And the routine of the trenches,
All the habits of the Boche cove.
All the Boche's beastly habits,
When he crumped, and when he
didn't,
How you got retaliation ;
Spoke of Véry lights and whizzbangs,
Lewis guns and working parties,
Of his leave, due Friday fortnight,
Of the foibles of his Colonel,
Of the rats that he had captured
With some cheese upon a bayonet.

Then they took him round their trenches,
Round their muddy maze of trenches,
Rather like an aggravated
Rabbit warren with the roof off,
Worse to find one's way about in
Than the dark and windy subways
Of the Piccadilly tube are.

In the day and night that followed
Many things learnt Tiadatha
Of the subtleties of trench-craft.

Learnt of crumps and duds and shrapnel,
And enjoyed himself immensely,
Little knowing how he'd loathe crumps
When he got to know them better.

There are very many trials
That a soldier can get used to :
Senior officers and bully,
Dug-outs, mules and ration biscuits,
Even standing-to in trenches
At some God-forsaken hour
On a cold and rainy morning,
But a crump is one of those things
That you never quite get used to,
And the longer that you know them,
Usually the less you like them.
Crumps are like the gilt-haired fairies
(Very swift and rather thrilling)
Tiadatha played about with
In the days he was a filbert—
Quite amusing when you meet them
Once or twice or even three times,
Who become a little trying
When they all turn up to supper
Regularly every evening.

But in those days Tiadatha
Didn't mind the crumps a little.

Laughed to hear them rustling over
All the time that he was shaving,
Laughed to see a couple bursting
In a traverse near his dug-out,
As he laughed at Cloe's sallies
On the day when first he met her
In her dressing-room at Daly's.

CHAPTER VI

TIADATHA'S JOURNEY

AS the Dudshires were preparing
For a winter in the trenches,
Just as they were getting settled
In their sector of the trenches,
Came an order for their moving
To an unknown destination—
Sudden as a German flare-light
To a midnight working party,
Unexpected as a kidney
To a quartermaster-sergeant.
There were many speculations
As to what was going to happen,
Many arguments about it,
Many wagers laid about it,
Many strange unholy rumours.

In the mighty British Army
Rumour is the only issue
That arrives at units larger
Than it leaves the Base Supply Park.
Up it comes without an indent

(Possibly in lieu of lime-juice),
Heaven only knows its maker ;
Like a toy balloon it swells up,
Gently growing big and bigger ;
At the Dump the Mr. Knowalls
Have a blow to make it fatter,
Pass it on to Transport drivers,
Who in their turn puff their hardest,
Make it change its shape a little,
Hand it over with the rations.
Then the minions of the Q.M.
Do their little bit to help it,
After which the Sergeant-Major
Takes a lusty breath to fix it,
Sends it up into the trenches
As a full-blown Army rumour.

Fast and thick as flying fishes
Rise and dive in the Pacific,
Rumours came and went in those days.
Sending off the whole battalion
On a mission to the Aztecs,
As town guard of Buenos Ayres,
Or to fight beside the Russians,
Or to sail for Salonica.
And the last seemed most fantastic,
Tiadatha laughed the loudest,
Laying 9 to 2 against it.

After several days of waiting,
Being issued out with goatskins,
Issued out with leather jerkins
(Fuel to the rumour-mongers),
Came a very trying night march
To a dreary railway station.

As they neared the railway station
Rose before my Tiadatha
Visions of a Pullman carriage,
Or at least a third-class smoker,
And he called to mind the adage,
" Third-class riding's always better,
Better far than first-class walking."
Bitterly the Dudshires grumbled,
When they found their third-class
riding
Was to be in old horse-boxes,
Squashed like figs and not so comfy :
Thirty-nine at first were crammed in,
Then another and another,
Then a pile of army blankets,
Then their overcoats in bundles.

Tiadatha and his brothers
Found themselves another horse-box,
Got a little straw and spread it,

Wrapped themselves up in their greatcoats,
Fell asleep with straw for mattress,
Someone else's boots for pillow.

Tiadatha often shuddered
Thinking of the days that followed,
Of the days and nights that followed,
As that God-forsaken troop train
Rocked upon its journey southward.
All his life will he remember
Turning out for tea at midnight
In some dimly-lighted station,
Shaving in acute discomfort,
Washing when he got a chance to,
Hotting up his ration bacon
On a wobbly Tommy's cooker,
Passing by the weary hours
Playing little games of vingty,
Losing one by one his chattels
In the straw about the horse-box,
In the straw that buried all things,
In the straw that clung to all things.

At Marseilles at last they halted,
And straightway my Tiadatha,
Having stretched his legs a little,
Found himself and all the Dudshires

Packed aboard a British cruiser ;
Not a chance to see the beauties
Of that very ancient seaport,
Not a chance to stop to dinner,
Not a chance to try his hand at
Crime-committing after dinner.

Soon, however, Tiadatha
Loathed the very thought of dinner
At Marseilles or in the Ward Room,
As that cruiser started rolling
Through the heaving Gulf of Lyons.
But there followed days of sunshine,
Sea and sky as blue as Reckitt's,
When he wished he'd joined the Navy,
Wished he'd gone and been a sailor,
When his only care was wondering
If he'd have another sherry.
What a periscope would look like,
Where on earth he'd left his life-belt,
Wondering still where they were bound for,
Egypt, Serbia, or Mespot :
Till at last all bets were settled,
All the speculations answered,
As one day my Tiadatha
Came on deck and saw before him
Salonica, white and lovely,
Gleaming in the morning sunlight.

CHAPTER VII

TIADATHA AT SALONICA

ON the day the Royal Dudshires
Set their foot in Salonica,
Nobody seemed pleased to see them,
No one worried much about them.
M.L.O.s were apathetic,
Not a bit enthusiastic,
Like a hostess at a party
When an uninvited guest comes.
And the folk of Salonica
Did not come to bid them welcome,
Did not hang out flags of welcome,
Did not cry, " 'Tis well, O brothers,
That ye come so far to see us."
(After all there was no reason
Why on earth they should have done so.)
But they stood and watched the Dudshires
Marching through their ancient city,
Slipping on their cobbled roadway,
Giving " Eyes Left " to a Greek guard ;

Stood and watched them from their door-
ways,

Watched them through their grimy windows,
Not a bit enthusiastic.

Many sights saw Tiadatha
As he marched through Salonica,
Cretan gendarmes with their long boots
And their breakfasts in their breeches,
In their great black baggy breeches ;
Turkish ladies clad in trousers ;
Tattered hamals bending double
With a load of fifty oil tins ;
Many little limping donkeys,
Little overladen donkeys,
As they crossed the Rue Egnatia
(Where St. Paul in bygone ages
Used to do his bit of shopping).
Tiadatha thought of Kipling,
Wondered if he'd ever been there,
Thought "At least in Rue Egnatia
East and West are met together."
There were trams and Turkish beggars,
Mosques and minarets and churches,
Turkish baths and dirty cafés,
Picture palaces and kan-kans ;
Daimler cars and Leyland lorries
Barging into buffalo wagons,

French and English private soldiers
Jostling seedy Eastern brigands.

On a hill near Lembet Village
Came to rest the Royal Dudshires,
And their tents sprang up like toadstools,
All the camp was fixed by tea-time,
All were settled down by tea-time.

There was nothing on that hillside,
Not a tree or habitation,
Save a little shanty standing
Like a palm tree in a desert—
The Canteen of Back (Orosdi).
There it was that Tiadatha
Tasted Greek beer for the first time,
Made a frugal meal of walnuts,
Figs and Turk's delight and éclairs,
Paid and found that he was living
Miles and miles beyond his income ;
Found his little lunch had cost him
More than if he'd been to Prince's.

Rumour in these days was busy.
They were going up to Serbia,
They were going off to Egypt ;
Twenty thousand Greeks were ready
(Rumour said) to down upon them,

Scupper them within their flea-bags
(Or, more pleasantly, intern them).
Many hours spent Tiadatha
Wondering what was going to happen.

All that happened was a blizzard,
Not a private soldier blizzard
With some Christmas cardy snowflakes,
But a perfect Balkan teaser,
Sergeant-Major of a blizzard,
Made of supersleet and hailstones,
Every bitter wind of heaven
Massed together for the business.

As a shade is to a candle
So is Uncle Time to trouble :
Looking back we mostly find things
Not so bad as once we thought them.
Fifty Uncle Times, however,
Could not shade for all who met it
Memories of that Balkan blizzard.

And the wretched Tiadatha
Groaned to find his bucket frozen,
Boots and even tooth-brush frozen,
Regularly every morning ;
Vainly tried to keep his feet warm,
Crouching o'er a little oil-stove,
Colder than New Zealand mutton,

Colder than an ice-cream soda.
And at intervals he murmured,
" How I hate this beastly country."
And the sergeants and the corporals,
And the luckless private soldiers,
Murmured as the wind came sweeping,
" How I hate this blinkin' country."
Little then dreamed Tiadatha
Of the times those words would tremble
On the lips of countless soldiers
In the Salonica Army,
Both in winter and in summer :
" How I hate this blinkin' country."

When the blizzard passed, the Dudshires
Settled down to work in earnest :
All day long obliging people
Found them jobs to keep them going.
Guards, fatigues and working parties,
Roads to make and hills to dig on.
All the livelong day the Dudshires
Spent in digging up the Balkans,
Toiling at redoubts and trenches,
Dug-outs, Lewis gun emplacements,
Finding when the things were finished
Someone thought that they'd be better
Ten yards higher up the hillside,
Ten yards lower down the hillside.

Then came strenuous Brigade Days,
Ruining expensive breeches,
Creepy-crawling over crest lines,
Picketing some height or other,
Getting lost at four pip emma,
Fed-up, far from home, and hungry.

So the weeks and months sped onward,
Samey as suburban houses,
Uneventful as a dud is,
Till the winter turned to spring-time,
Till the spring-time scattered flowers
Like confetti on the hillsides.

CHAPTER VIII

A DAY IN SALONIQUE

THERE are many famous highways,

Many famous streets in history :

Watling Street and Piccadilly,

Sidney Street and Champs-Elysée,

And the Appian Way and Wall Street,

But the Lembet Road will ever

Take a place in fame beside them,

While a single British soldier

Lives to tell of Salonica.

Mud and slush and bumps in winter,

Bumps and dust and flies in summer.

Still, it's filled out since we found it,

Since we got to work upon it,

As a skinny baby fills out

After being fed on Benger's.

There it was that Tiadatha

Learnt the gentle art of wangling

Lifts in cars and motor lorries

Down to Piccadilly Circus,

In the days before the Bulgar
Strolled into the Struma Valley.

He would spend the morning shopping,
Buying sundry brands of whisky
(Mostly made by local effort)
At the most prodigious prices ;
In his hob-nailed boots he slithered
Up and down Rue Venizelos,
Buying mullet by the oke,
Buying tangerines and chestnuts.
Shopkeepers would see him coming,
Cry with glee, "Here's Tiadatha,
Plenty money, Tiadatha."

After lunch at the Olympus
(Prices higher than the mountain),
Off he sped to Baths of Botton,
Tasted once again the pleasures
Of a bath you can lie down in.
Though the soap was green and hardy,
Though the towels weren't all they might be,
Even though the place was dirty,
It was better than a bucket.
Good and hot he made the water,
Lay and splashed for half-an-hour,
Whistling snatches of a rag-time.

Then of course he tea'd at Floca's
Cosmopolitan as Shepheard's,
Ever full to overflowing.
In those days there came to Floca's
Officers of many armies,
Officers of many navies,
Mufti-wallahs of all nations.
Came the Greeks (with swords beside
them),
Gold and scarlet as a sunset,
Came the Italians with their grey cloaks,
French with caps like skies in summer,
Came the Serbs and came the Russians,
Came the English, Jocks and Irish,
Admirals, snotties and Commanders,
Colonels, Generals and Captains,
And a few bold bad Lieutenants
Poodle-faking with some sisters.
Here they met and fed together,
Drank their mastic, tea or absinthe,
Talked their own peculiar language,
Twenty tongues and yet one language :
When they wanted their *addition*,
Wanted their perspiring waiter,
They just clapped their hands together,
Loudly clapped their hands together,
Two or three or even four times.
And in good time came the waiter,

Dodging round the crowded tables,
As a cycling newsboy dodges
In and out of London traffic,
Added tip into the total,
Just for fear they should forget it.

After tea a bit more shopping,
And perhaps a Picture Palace
(Fifteen suicides and murders
In the space of half-an-hour).
Then he dined at Bastasini's,
Dined at the expensive Roma,
With his very best pal Percy ;
Drank some pretty nasty bubbly,
Sat and watched the other diners
Wrestling with their macaroni,
Watched a livery Greek major
(More and more and more impatient
For the omelette he had ordered)
Break a plate upon the table,
Dash one on the floor in pieces,
Then another and another,
Till the room was in an uproar,
Till he'd got the whole staff round him.
"Stout old heart," cheered Tiadatha,
"Go it, Steve," cheered Tiadatha,
"That's the only way to do it
If you're really in a hurry."

After dinner off they sallied
To the Odéon or Tour Blanche
(Where you never paid but pushed past),
Crowded in the nearest stage-box,
Or if it was locked climbed over.

Had you asked my Tiadatha
If the show was very thrilling,
If the lovely ladies sang him
Haunting songs of joy and sadness,
He'd have told you in a minute
That he hadn't time to notice.
He was always much too busy
Shouting "Un, deux, trois" with Frenchmen,
Drinking lager beer with Serbians,
Swapping caps with ice-cream merchants,
Helping several rowdy Russkis
To lasso the band conductor,
Having special little Ententes
With a boxful of the Navy;
Much too busy ragging Bertha,
Andrée, Denisette or Dolly,
Much too busy dodging Zizi,
When she clamoured "Champagne cider."
And when A.P.M.s came prowling,
He would disappear sedately
With a beer mug in one pocket,
And a tin tray in the other,

Finish up a noisy evening
With a game of "Ring-a-roses,"
Then jolt campwards in a gharry
To valise and well-earned slumber.

* * * * *

Do not fear my Tiadatha
Gently sliding to Avernus,
Losing all the pleasant manners
Taught him by his lady mother,
Do not fear one day to find him
Clapping hands at Rumpelmeyer's
For another chocolate éclair,
Breaking plates and things at Prince's
When his lunch is long in coming,
Looting beer mugs at the Palace
Or lassoing the conductor—
He must do as Salonique does,
For there's nothing else to do there.

Some there are find Salonica
Dirty, dull and evil-smelling.
Bored to tears, they sometimes ask you
What on earth there is to do there.
But I make reply and tell them
Salonica's what you make it.
London can be just as boring
As a dug-out in the trenches,

Or a dug-out in the trenches
Can be merrier than Murray's—
If you've got the right coves in it,
Got a little drop of whisky,
Other climes and other morals :
When you go to Salonica,
Be an idiot for an evening,
Make a noise with Tiadatha,
Drink your beer and pinch the glasses,
Raid the band and rag the fairies,
Dance a fox-trot with a Frenchman,
Get a little mild amusement
Even out of Salonica.

CHAPTER IX

UP THE LINE

OFTEN in those days of digging,
Days of weary treks up country,
Days of strenuous manœuvres,
Came the listless private soldiers,
Came the corporals and the sergeants,
Spoke a word with Tiadatha,
Saying, "What about this war, sir ?
Do you think we'll ever find it,
Ever see a Boche or Bulgar,
Ever show 'em what we're made of ?"
"Never fear," said Tiadatha,
Speaking with prophetic insight.
"There is time enough for fighting,
Time enough for Boche and Bulgar ;
Though it may be long in coming,
Yet you'll get your share of fighting,
Get your bellyful of fighting
Ere you've finished with the Balkans."

As a band of shipwrecked sailors,
Cast upon a desert island,
Strain their eyes in weary watching
For a sail on the horizon,
Even so the Royal Dudshires
Watched and waited for the order
That would send them to the trenches,
Take them from their desert island,
From their daily round of digging.
And at times there came a rumour,
Like a speck on the horizon.
Eagerly the Dudshires hailed it,
Thought that it was going to save them,
But it always came to nothing.

So they sweltered through the summer,
Through the arid Balkan summer,
And the sun beat down upon them,
Hot as towels a Yankee barber
Claps upon you when he's shaved you.
They would rise at godless hours,
Working in the dawn and evening,
And throughout the blazing daytime
Lie inside their scorching bivvies
On a barren Balkan hillside
(Innocent of shade or cover
As a very bald man's head is),
Lie and curse the tepid water,

Curse the flies and the mosquitoes,
Till at last there came the order,
Secret order for their moving
To the front line and the trenches,
And in under twenty minutes
Every soldier knew about it.

All was bustle and excitement,
Packing up and getting ready,
And the T.O. and the Q.M.
Swores their lives were not worth living,
Swores they'd need at least another
Fifty mules to move the regiment.
And straightway my Tiadatha
Went and got his kit together,
Did his utmost to reduce it,
Threw away a pair of bedsocks,
And a tie his aunt had sent him,
Sighed to leave his bed behind him,
Wrought by Private Woggs, his batman,
Wrought from bits of ration boxes,
And a scrap of wire netting.

Then at last one summer evening,
In July of 1916,
Tiadatha and the Dudshires
Started on their journey northward,
On their journey to the trenches;

Every night at dusk they started,
Marched with full packs through the darkness
(No one talking, no one smoking),
Plodded onward through the darkness,
And, perhaps at two a.m.,
Reached a barren piece of waste land,
Found their mules and fetched their blankets,
Dossed down with the stars for ceiling,
Snatched a little sleep till daylight.
All the day they lay and simmered,
Stuck a blanket up for shelter,
Spent the sultry morning thinking
Of the things they would have given
For a long sweet draught of cold beer,
Bass or Worthington or Allsopp,
In a long cool lager beer mug.
Sighed, and drank some tepid water,
Ate some squishy-squashy bully,
Moist and warm and very nasty.

For five nights and days the Dudshires
Fared upon their journey northward,
On the sixth they reached the front line
And relieved a French battalion,
In a pelting, pouring rainstorm.

As the guide led Tiadatha
On towards his destination,

To the section of the front line
He was ordered to take over,
Soon he found that all was different
From the warfare he had known
In the line near Bray and Albert.
He had pictured deep-dug trenches,
He had pictured winding C.T.s
Saps and mines and concrete dug-outs,
Belts of wire as broad as rivers,
Bulgar posts within a bomb's throw.
But he found instead of trenches
Little scratchings on the hill-tops,
Outposts scattered on the hill-tops,
Reached by little winding pathways,
Strands of wire forlornly dangling,
Limp and spiritless and sketchy,
As a stricken banjo's strings are,
And instead of concrete dug-outs
Leaky shelters made of oak-leaves
Perched behind the barren hill-tops.

There it was that Tiadatha
Found at length a French lieutenant,
Picked up scraps of information,
Talking in his very vile French,
Learnt the methods of patrolling,
Learnt the habits of the Bulgar,
Learnt that he was three miles distant,

Learnt of 535 his stronghold,
Crawling with O. Pips and field-guns.
Then they left the dim-lit *abri*,
Staggered out into the darkness,
Through the pelting, pouring rainstorm,
Silently relieved the sentries,
Posted all the Dudshire sentries,
Whispered to them what their job was,
What the number of their group was,
Where the groups on right and left were.
Then the gallant French lieutenant
Gathered all his men together,
Left his little bits of trenches
To the rain and Tiadatha.

ITEA,

January 18, 1918. —

CHAPTER X

CARRYING ON

THERE are very many lessons
Taught you by the British Army,
And when you have boiled the lot down
Only two things really matter.
When you've learnt them you're a soldier,
Till you have you're still a duffer ;
First to know your left from right hand,
Next to find your way in darkness—
Both are passing hard to master.
After nearly two years' training
Tiadatha could be trusted
Not to go and bawl out "Eyes Right"
To a guard upon his left hand,
But to find his way in darkness
Was a very different pigeon.

If you lose your way in London
You can always ask a policeman,
You can always hail a taxi,
But there were no taxis plying

From Baraka to Sidemli,
No policeman's measured footfall
'Twixt Les Batignolles and Clichy.
Round about these pleasant places
Nightly Tiadatha staggered,
Visiting his lonely outposts,
Taking out a digging party,
Leading out patrols to Dautli.
Up and down the hills he stumbled,
Crossing little winding *dere*,
Falling into rocky gullies,
Falling into blackberry bushes,
Into unexpected shell holes,
Took wrong turnings in the darkness
(Hardly ever took the right one),
Lost his bearings far more often
Than a woman loses hankies.
On patrol the Pitons knew him,
Bekerli and Green Hill knew him,
And the minaret that rises
From the ruins of Sidemli ;
Marching homewards in the daylight
Often he would stop to rest there,
Stop to gather fruit for dinner
From the plum trees in the village ;
And one day he drove some Bulgars
From a little unnamed *piton*,
Drove them off in wild confusion,

Brought their rifles back in triumph,
Brought a cap and water-bottle,
Brought some cheese they'd left behind them.
And the General named the *piton*,
Called it after Tiadatha,
Called it Tiadatha's Piton.

Then one night the Royal Dudshires
Moved a little farther forward,
Pinched some hills and sat upon them ;
Hurriedly they dug them trenches,
Put up rolls of concertina ;
And one afternoon in August
(In the midst of crumps and shrapnel)
Put to flight three thousand Bulgars
Who had sallied forth to meet them.

Several weeks my Tiadatha
Lived on sundry little hill-tops,
Changing over every fortnight,
Sleeping in a sketchy bivvy,
Sleeping with his boots and clothes on.
Just as he was getting settled,
Had his trenches nearly finished,
Promptly the battalion shifted,
Marched for one night to the eastward,
Then passed by the boundary pillar,
Passed the Serbian boundary pillar

On the road that leads to Doiran,
Once again relieved their Allies,
In the line that looked o'er Doiran,
In the line where Grand Couronné
Frowned upon their every movement
As the mighty 535 did :
Loomed above them like the Great Wheel
At the Earl's Court Exhibition.

There my tireless Tiadatha
Came one dark October evening,
Found a certain Captain Siomme,
Sitting in a dim-lit dug-out,
Pledged with him eternal friendship
In a loving-cup of *vin rouge*.
Then said gallant Captain Siomme,
" I will show you all the trenches,
All the wire beyond the trenches,
Show you where it wants repairing,
Show you also where the gaps are."
Silently they crept towards it,
Siomme and my Tiadatha :
" *Silence !*" said the gallant Siomme,
Lifting up a warning finger,
Pursing up his lips in warning,
" *Sérieux, fort sérieux, sir,*
Silence, silence, Tiadatha "—
Didn't see the barbed wire coming

Didn't see it in the darkness,
Into his own wire went crashing,
Dragging Tiadatha with him,
And straightway forgot his warnings.
Terrible the oaths he uttered,
Cursing loudly in the French tongue,
Crept out of the jangling barbed wire,
Extricated Tiadatha.

Thereupon a Bulgar sentry,
Wakened from his pleasant slumbers,
Feeling rather bored about it,
Heaved a bomb at Captain Siomme,
Heaved a bomb at Tiadatha,
As a householder in London,
Wakened from his pleasant slumber
By a tomcat on the house tiles,
Opens wide his bedroom window,
Heaves a bootjack at the noises.
Then a zealous Dudshire sentry
Swiftly flung a bomb in answer,
Followed it with five rounds rapid,
Thinking that there was a war on.
Then the Bulgars sent a light up,
And another and another,
Made the darkness light as Bond Street
On an afternoon in winter.
Siomme and my Tiadatha
Lay and grovelled on their tummies,

Still as any startled tortoise.
After that the German gunners
Put a dozen salvoes over,
And the English field-guns opened,
Feeling sure there was a war on.
Bits of bombs and crumps and shrapnel
Made the autumn evening hideous,
Groups stood to, machine-guns rattled,
All the telephones got busy,
And supports turned out in dudgeon.

As a prairie fire is started
By a match or cigarette end,
So a mighty strafe was started
All because the gallant Siomme
Fell into his own defences.

Swiftly as it came, it faded,
And the night regained its stillness,
Gunners settled down to slumber,
Sentries settled down to watching,
Telephones at last subsided,
And fed-up supports departed
To their dug-outs in the trenches.

Siomme and my Tiadatha
Found their way back in the darkness
To the Company Headquarters,

Pledged once more eternal friendship
In another mug of *vin rouge*,
Afterwards in one of whisky,
Then wired in "relief completed."
After which the gallant Captain
And his officers and privates
Straggled off into the darkness
To wherever they were going.

LONDON,

February 18, 1918.

CHAPTER XI

TIADATHA'S DUG-OUT

VERY lovely is Kyoto
In the days of cherry blossom ;
Very lovely is the splendour
Of the snow-wrapped Rocky Mountains ;
Lovely are the coral islands
Strung like jade in the Pacific,
And the palm trees of Malaya,
Black against an orange sunset.
Lovely are the long white breakers
On the beach at Honolulu.
Even as the Thames Embankment
On a misty day in autumn.
Gib. at dawn, Hong Kong at evening,
Lights of Rio in the darkness,
And the Golden Gate of 'Frisco,
All of these are very lovely,
Yet I know a sight still fairer,
Doiran red and grey and yellow,
Clustered on the Serbian hillside,

Gleaming in the morning sunlight,
Ever gazing, like Narcissus,
Down upon its own reflection
In the lake that laps its houses—
Lovely when you first behold it,
It becomes a trifle boring
When week after week it greets you
Every morning as the dawn breaks,
And the cry "Stand down" is given
When the sun comes stealing gently
Sure as Fate above the hill-tops,
And the Bulgar starts his sniping.
Thus my Tiadatha saw it
Every morning as the dawn broke,
Through the livelong Serbian winter,
Saw its church and battered houses,
Saw the Bulgars' lines before it,
Snow-capped Beles to the Eastward,
Grand Couronné to the Westward.

All those winter months the Dudshires
Picked and dug the Serbian hillside.
Left their mark on Macedonia
Like a tripper on a tree trunk,
Slaved their souls out making trenches,
Slaved their souls out making dug-outs,
That they might be somewhat safer
From the beastly little pipsqueaks,

From the most unpleasant whizzbangs,
From the great big five-point-niners,
And the crumps the eight-inch how. sends.

Then one day quoth Tiadatha,
" I am sick of leafy bowers,
I am sick of bivvy shelters ;
They are too darned cold for one thing,
Much too narrow for another.
I will also make a dug-out,
Make myself a home to live in,
Furnish it unto my liking,
Coax perhaps a little comfort
Even out of Macedonia."

So he called for Woggs, his batman,
Bade him fetch a pick and shovel,
Doffed his tunic, tie and collar,
Set to work with Woggs in earnest.
All day long they picked and shovelled,
Pausing only when a crump came,
Pausing only for a pipsqueak,
Till poor Tiadatha's back ached,
Till his hands were badly blistered,
And he wearied of the labour.
Called in four stout private soldiers,
Set them too upon the digging,
Helped to fill and tie the sandbags,

Helped to get them in position,
Leaving spaces for a window
And a little narrow doorway.

Then he called again his batman,
Called for Woggs the faithful batman,
Whispered certain secret orders,
And, upon the morning after,
Found himself the proud possessor
Of a dozen sheets of iron,
Sheets of corrugated iron,
And some bits of brand-new timber.
Little recked my Tiadatha
That a certain R.E. Captain
Even then was musing darkly
As to where the stuff had got to.

So they roofed the little dug-out
With the scraps of purloined timber,
With the bits of stolen iron,
Then they piled the roof with sandbags,
Fondly hoping it would keep out
Anyhow a dud or pipsqueak.

Then the tireless Woggs got busy,
Hung the walls with bits of sacking,
Made a chair and made a table

And some shelves from ration boxes,
Even made a little washstand,
With an old tin hat for basin,
And a rather dicky bedstead,
From a few odd wiring pickets
And a roll of rabbit netting
(Borrowed from the Sergeant-Major
When that worthy wasn't looking),
Filled an old tin mug with flowers,
Decked the walls with dreadful pictures
From *La Vie* and from *The Tailer*.

“One thing more,” cried Tiadatha,
“One thing even now is lacking.
What about a little fireplace,
What about it, O my batman ?”
Not a word spoke Woggs the batman,
Save to murmur, “Very good, sir,”
Went and pinched an empty oil drum,
Spent the afternoon in hammering;
Hammered till he woke the Colonel,
Hammered till he woke the Major.
Moved away a little farther,
Till he'd got his job of work done,
Then he fixed it in the dug-out,
With some puddled mud he fixed it,
Got a piece of tin for chimney,

Dug some vine roots up for firewood,
Eked them out with bits of charcoal
Wangled from Headquarters' cookhouse.

And that night my Tiadatha,
Wet and weary from the trenches,
Found a cheery wood fire blazing,
Found a most uncommon fug up.
"It is well," said Tiadatha,
"It is well, my soldier servant,
Well and truly have you served me.
Take this tin of Craven Mixture,
Take this tin of Royal Beauties,
Take this tin of Cadbury's chocolate.
Also there is my rum ration,
You are very welcome to it,
And I'll see the Sergeant-Major,
Get you off parade to-morrow."

Then he drew his crazy chair up,
Lit his pipe and stretched his legs out,
Heaved a sigh of great contentment,
Gazed into the flames in silence,
Dreaming of his green-eyed Phyllis,
And of Murray's where he met her,
Dreaming of his loved St. James's,
So forgot the war a little.

Tiadatha'd learnt the lesson
Which is learnt by every traveller,
That wherever you may wander
You should never be uncomfy
Any longer than you've got to,
Never play the Spartan hero
When there isn't any need to.
If you set your mind upon it,
You can always coax some comfort
Out of life and barren hillsides,
Coax it as you'd coax a fiver
From a very mean old uncle.

MELIDEN, N. WALES,

March 1918.

CHAPTER XII

TIADATHA'S BATTLE

MANY stunts did Tiadatha
In the line in front of Doiran.
He would often go patrolling
Right up to the Bulgar trenches ;
Sometimes he would bring a board back
With a Bulgar notice on it
Asking him and all the Dudshires
To surrender and be matey.
Down the steep Patte d'Oie he stumbled,
Up and down the winding Jumeaux,
Drawing bombs from Bulgar sentries,
Drawing everlasting star-shells ;
He would take a Lewis gun out,
Strafe a post or working party,
Raid a trench of Johnny Bulgar's,
Blow up several concrete dug-outs,
Bring some prisoners home to breakfast.
Every day the German gunners
Shelled his line with crumps and shrapnel,
And for months the Royal Dudshires
Never moved behind their field-guns.

Winter passed with mud and blizzards,
Spring-time brought the sun and flowers,
Also rumours of advancing,
Rumours of attacks in earnest.
Tiadatha heard the story
From his batman, who had got it
Off the driver of a lorry,
Who had gleaned it from a waiter
In a Salonica café.

There were mighty preparations,
Practising attacks and what not ;
Guns sprang up in every corner,
Sprang up in the night like mushrooms.
Dumps like lucky dips were dotted
In most unexpected places,
Carefully covered with tarpaulins,
Camouflaged with leaves and branches ;
Airmen all day long were busy
Taking photographs of trenches,
And the Staff wrote reams of orders,
Reams and reams and reams of orders,
And some more when those were finished.

On the days before the battle
All the British guns were firing,
Cutting wire and pounding trenches
And O.P.s and gun emplacements ;

Earth and stones went splashing skywards,
Just as water in a river
Splashes when you throw a rock in.

Four days long the guns had thundered,
When one starlit April evening
Came the Dudshires' mighty battle.
Not a man in all the Dudshires,
None who lived to see the daylight,
Ever could forget that evening,
Least of all my Tiadatha.

Very clear it was and starlight,
And a nightingale was singing
Somewhere in among the bushes ;
Many of the soldiers heard it
In the little lulls of firing,
Heard its silver notes go throbbing
Out into the April evening.

Watch on wrist stood Tiadatha,
Gazing anxious at the minutes
As the starting time came nearer.
He was clad in Tommy's tunic,
Tommy's breeches and equipment,
In his hands he bore a rifle,
On his head a shrapnel helmet.
Then at last he gave the signal,

And his men filed out behind him.
Through the gaps they wound like serpents,
Into No Man's Land they sallied,
Through the din of bursting shrapnel,
Through the bursting high explosives.
Down the steep Patte d'Oie he led
them,
Down that steep and rocky gully,
Rocky as a Cornish headland,
Steeper than a traveller's story :
There the dread trench mortar barrage
Swept upon them like a hailstorm,
Storm with stones as big as footballs,
Stones alive with death and torture.
Through that blinding storm he led them,
Up the farther side he led them—
All that were not killed or wounded.
There upon the flashing hillside
Tiadatha crouched and waited,
Waited for the Zero hour,
When the barrage would be lengthened,
Lifted from the front line trenches.

As the moment came he leapt up,
Gave a shout to all the Dudshires,
And the Dudshires rose and followed,
Charged beside my Tiadatha—
All who were not killed or wounded.

Through the broken wire they scrambled,
Some men cursing, some men shouting,
Some men muttering little prayers,
Some in grim and deadly silence.

They were met by bombs and bullets,
Heard the Bulgars in their trenches,
Heard them crying : " Come on, Johnny,
Come on, come on, English Johnny."
And three times the Royal Dudshires
Swept upon the Bulgar trenches,
Every time the line was thinner,
Every time its heart was steadfast.
And the third time Tiadatha,
With a little band behind him,
Leapt into the battered trenches,
Got to work with bomb and bayonet,
In his heart the lust of battle ;
Then felt something hit his shoulder,
Felt his shoulder wet and burning,
Found he'd stopped a shrapnel bullet,
Set his teeth and staggered onwards,
Led his party round a traverse,
Bombed a dug-out full of Bulgars,
Bombed until his bombs were finished,
Carried on with German stink-bombs
That the Bulgar'd left behind him.

On and on the little party
Pushed along the Bulgar trenches,
Till there came a deadly sickness
Stealing over Tiadatha,
And he knew his strength was failing,
Knew that he could get no farther,
So he shouted to his corporal,
"Take them on and do your damnedest."
Flopped down in the trench and fainted.

Then came Woggs, the soldier servant,
Trusty Woggs, the ever-ready,
And produced a flask of brandy,
Poured it down my Tiadatha.
"Curse you, Woggs," said Tiadatha,
"Go on with your section leader.
Every man of you'll be wanted,
I'll crawl back and get my wound dressed,
Then I'll come again and find you."

Painfully and very slowly,
Somehow Tiadatha stumbled
Back towards the dressing station,
Back through crumps and bursting shrapnel,
Met two crawling wounded privates,
And they helped and helped each other,
Till at last my Tiadatha

Found himself upon a stretcher
In the crowded dressing station.
There they tended him and dressed him,
'Midst the groaning of the wounded,
'Midst the raving of the battle,
And the padre, bending over,
Murmured, " Well done, Tiadatha,
Anything that I can get you ? "
And my Tiadatha answered,
Smiling through his pain he answered,
" All I want's some beer, old Padre,
Just one bottle very quickly."

* * * * *

Had you been there when the dawn broke,
Had you looked from out the trenches,
You'd have seen that Serbian hillside,
Seen the aftermath of battle.
Seen the scattered picks and shovels,
Seen the scraps of stray equipment,
Here and there a lonely rifle,
Or a Lewis gun all twisted.
Seen the little heaps of khaki
Lying huddled on the hillside,
Huddled by the Bulgar trenches
Very still and very silent,
Nothing stirring, nothing moving,
Save a very gallant doctor

And his band of stretcher bearers
Working fearless in the open,
Giving water to the dying,
Bringing in those broken soldiers.
You'd have seen the sunlight streaming,
And perhaps you would have wondered
How the sun could still be shining,
How the birds could still be singing,
While so many British soldiers
Lay so still upon the hillside.

EATON HALL, CHESTER,

May 1918.

CHAPTER XIII

TIADATHA IN HOSPITAL

SOON my wounded Tiadatha
Carefully labelled like a parcel
Started on his journey Baseward,
Fared upon that fearful journey,
Burning head and aching shoulder,
Fared upon a swaying *dhuli*
In an ambulance that shook him
As you shake a medicine bottle,
Seemed to shake his very soul out.
Rocking like a tiny dinghy
When a choppy sea is running.
One night in the Clearing Station,
Then by train to Salonica ;
And throughout that weary journey,
In F.A. or Clearing Station,
Came those everlasting questions
Very dear to all the Ram Corps :
“ Unit, age and length of service ? ”
“ Rank and Christian name ? ” and what not,
Till it seemed to Tiadatha

That the whole Ram Corps was round him,
Armed with note-books, armed with pencils,
Perching everywhere about him,
Sometimes perching on his tummy,
Often climbing up the tent poles,
Thirsting for these silly details,
Reeling off these silly questions,
" Unit, rank and length of service ? "
" Colour of your mother's eyebrows ? "
" Christian names of all your sisters ? "
" Age of all your aunts and uncles ? "
So it seemed to Tiadatha,
To my fevered Tiadatha,
Till he dropped to sleep and left them,
Those tormentors and their questions,
Left them as a railway carriage,
Gliding gently from the station,
Leaves the crowd upon the platform.

But at last the journey ended,
Tiadatha came to anchor
In a bed with snowy pillows,
Bed with snowy sheets and pillows
Cool and sweet as flowing water,
Soothing as a summer's evening,
Comforting as cherry brandy
On a chilly winter morning.
He was tended by a sister,

Soft of voice and very gentle,
And she seemed to Tiadatha,
After all those months of warfare,
Like a little glimpse of England,
Made him think of English roses,
English lanes and English gardens ;
And he looked at her and loved her,
Wondered vaguely what her name was,
If she ever lost her temper,
How she kept her hands so lovely,
How on earth she put her cap on.

Soon there came a solemn conclave
Round the bed of Tiadatha,
Which discussed if it should send him
To the X-Rays or the Theatre
(Ghastly irony "the Theatre").
Starved him for a day and sent him
To the operating table.
There the luckless Tiadatha
Felt the world go slipping from him
Used the most appalling language,
Knew no more till all was over,
Came to, feeling sick and sorry,
Found himself a mass of bandage,
Found himself a lump of aching,
And beheld the shrapnel bullet
He had stopped that April evening.

Back they took him to his pillows,
And his gentle, soft-voiced sister
Laid her cool hand on his forehead,
And a peace came stealing o'er him
As a mist steals o'er the mountains.

Very soon my Tiadatha
Got to know the faces near him,
Got to know his brother patients ;
They exchanged some lurid details
Of their wounds and operations,
Finding that a touch of shrapnel
Always makes the whole world kindred.
And he soon got fit to grumble,
Grouse and grumble at his diet,
Groused that it was mostly liquid,
Yet without a drop of whisky ;
As an exile in the tropics
Pines to smell an English primrose,
So poor thirsty Tiadatha
Pined to smell a Scotch-and-Soda.

Gradually came convalescence,
Days made up of little trials,
Days made up of little pleasures,
Days of unaccustomed idling,
Pleasant days of doing nothing ;
Every morning after breakfast

He would lie back on his pillows,
Read his *Balkan News* in comfort,
Spend his day in eating, sleeping,
Killing flies and reading novels,
Writing to his green-eyed Phyllis,
Taking very nasty medicine,
Listening to another's snoring ;
And sometimes a Dudshire brother
Came and saw him for a minute,
Brought some scandal from the trenches,
Did my Tiadatha's heart good.

Then at last there came a morning
When his smiling sister told him,
" Yes, you *may* get up this morning,
Walk about a bit this morning."
In his good time, Tiadatha
Washed and shaved and got some clothes on,
Tried to walk about a little,
Felt as though the bones were missing
From his knees and from his ankles,
Tottered as a baby totters
Staggering from chair to table,
Called his sympathetic sister,
Found her arm was very helpful.

Slowly like a tide his strength came,
Like a rising tide his strength came,

Like a rising wind his spirits.
And he sat out in the sunshine,
Pottered round the wards and compounds
Chatting to a wounded Tommy,
Chatting to a Dudshire brother,
Wrote more letters, read more novels,
Played the gramophone for ages,
Played a game of bridge and poker,
Went for picnics with his sister,
Sometimes by the sandy seashore,
Sometimes on a shady hillside,
Recking little of the matron.

Then one afternoon the General
Came into the ward to see him,
Pinned a ribbon on his tunic,
Pinned the M.C. ribbon on him,
Saying, " Well done, Tiadatha,
May you have long life to wear it ! "
Whereupon my Tiadatha
Very nearly asked the General
What on earth he'd done to get it,
Done to earn that precious ribbon,
Having hazy recollections
Of that most unpleasant evening.
But was very bucked about it,
Sent a cable to his mother,
Sent one to his green-eyed Phyllis,

Held a little celebration
At the French Club on the quiet,
Did himself so very proudly
That his temperature went soaring
In the morning like a skylark.

* * * * *

Hospital, like work and whisky,
Is a taste to be acquired,
But it soon becomes a habit,
Very soon becomes a habit.
That was why my Tiadatha
Felt so very loth to leave it,
Loth to leave his bed and pillows,
Loth to leave those kindly people,
Cheery V.A.D.s and sisters,
Who had fed and dressed and nursed him
Just as if he'd been a baby ;
And his heart was very heavy,
Fuller than a well-filled wine-glass,
As he thought of those brave people,
Brave as any soldier hero,
Working through the Balkan summer,
Working through the Balkan winter,
Working harder far than he did,
All for him and such as he was.
But at last the time of parting
Came, relentless as to-morrow,

And a sad-faced Tiadatha
Set off on a bumpy journey
To the wooded slopes of Hortiach,
Said good-bye to those good comrades,
To those V.A.D.s and sisters,
To those little scraps of England.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRE

FOR a while my Tiadatha
Rested on the slopes of Hortiach,
Rested till he'd got his strength back.
Then at Summer Hill he sojourned,
Barren camp where no one lingers
Any longer than he's got to ;
Thence he went by easy stages
Back to join the Royal Dudshires.
Found them up at Karasouli,
Found so many faces missing
That at first his heart was lonely,
But a few were still remaining,
Still a few familiar faces,
And they made him very welcome,
With them Woggs his soldier servant.
But although he made new comrades,
Carried on without the old ones,
Yet his heart was often lonely,
Lonely for those missing faces.

Thus they met another summer,
Sweltered through another summer,
Changing over every fortnight
With a neighbouring battalion.
Smol and Macukovo saw them,
Waggon Hill and Green Hill saw them,
Dache, "P.N.," and Kalinova,
And the muddy Vardar River,
And they did a so-called rest cure
On the side of shadeless Kirec.

Then one day in blazing August
Tiadatha pinched a week-end,
Touched his Colonel for a week-end,
"Just to do a bit of shopping,"
And buzzed down to Salonica
With his very best pal, Percy,
Put up at the Hotel Splendide,
Taking Woggs, the soldier servant.

After tea at Uncle Floca's,
After tea they did some shopping,
Bought some Mess stores from Coppola's,
Bought some braces from Orosdi's
(Selfridge's of Salonica),
Took some watches for repairing
As requested by their sergeants,
Had a shampoo and a haircut,

Had their usual bath at Botton's,
Sauntered back towards the Splendide
For their evening gin and vermouth.

They were met by Woggs the batman,
Trusty Woggs the ever-ready,
In a state of huge excitement :
" Please, sir, half the town's ablaze, sir :
Started in the Turkish Quarter,
May be here at any moment."

" Oh, indeed," said Tiadatha,
Thinking very little of it,
" Come as usual in the morning,"
Went with Percy to the French Club
Bent upon a pleasant evening.

All things can be won by waiting,
All things can be won by pushing,
Even dinner at the French Club,
Where our very generous Allies
Let us come and eat their rations.
There they had a special dinner,
Percy and my Tiadatha,
Cooked as only Frenchmen can cook,
With some passable Veuve Clicquot,
Drier than Macaulay's Essays,
Cheering as a nigger rag-time,

Followed by some fine old brandy,
All produced by smiling Camille,
Now a *poilu*, late of Prince's.

Then they wandered to the Tour Blanche
For the usual evening revel,
Feeling very bright and merry,
Found the doors were barred against them.
Wandered on a little farther
To the Leicester Lounge and Gaiety,
Found the doors were barred against them,
Found them housing homeless women
With their baggage and their babies.
"Woggs was right," said Tiadatha,
"True enough the town is blazing;
This is going to be 'some' evening."

All the sky was glowing crimson,
Clouds of smoke were welling upwards,
And the sparks like golden raindrops
Poured upon those wooden houses
Packed like herrings in a barrel;
And a mighty wind was blowing,
Sweeping from the hills to seaward.
Percy and my Tiadatha
Dashed along the Rue Egnatia,
Saw the fire was driving down it
As a bore drives down a river;

Ruthless as an angry bison,
Hungry as a famished tiger,
Eating up the wooden houses,
Eating up the shops and cafés.
Falling beams and crashing shutters,
All were gone in half a minute,
Swallowed by that whirling furnace.
Soon it burnt the Provost Marshal
Out of his expensive office,
Soon it reached the Rue Venizelos,
Where a fitful fire-engine
(All that Salonica boasted)
Played upon the flames in trickles,
Did about as much to quench them
As a mug of tepid water
Does to quench the thirst of soldiers
In a boiling Balkan summer.
"Going some," said Tiadatha,
"Better hop back to the Splendide,
Heaven and earth aren't going to stop it."

So they raced back to the Splendide,
Found that Woggs had packed their kits up
Ready for a hasty exit,
For already flames were lapping,
Like the waves, against the Splendide.
All along the Odos Nike
Clouds of smoke came welling faster,

Thicker than a fog in London,
And a million sparks were whirling,
And the flames were sweeping nearer.
Coughing, choking, nearly blinded,
Tiadatha, Woggs and Percy
Stumbled through the smoky blackness,
Tripping over bits of wreckage,
Fought their way along the sea front,
While the sparks came showering on them
Like confetti at a wedding,
And they got the wind up badly—
Worse than on that April evening
When they went for Johnny Bulgar—
Passed the old White Tower panting,
Reached the French Club Courtyard breath-
less.

In the Courtyard of the French Club
On its side an urn reposess,
Old and huge and most capacious,
Dug up by our gallant Allies
From the heart of Macedonia,
And it seemed to Tiadatha
Just the haven that they wanted,
So he bade Woggs dump their kits in,
Bade him scramble in and guard them,
Then went back to do the hero
With a very breathless Percy.

All the streets were wild confusion,
Refugees were streaming Eastward,
Pouring Eastward in their thousands,
Some with loaded carts and donkeys,
Some with gharries piled to heaven.
Old men bleating, children screaming,
Broken-hearted women sobbing,
Wailing for their homes and treasures.
All the streets were blocked and littered
With all kinds of goods and chattels,
Feather mattresses and tables,
Chairs and clocks and iron bedsteads,
Looking glasses, jugs and bundles,
Pillows, pots and pans and pictures.

Percy and my Tiadatha
Took their stand at a street corner,
Started running things in earnest,
Cleared the houses of the people,
Helped them get what things they could out,
Made them leave the things they couldn't.
Chased and biffed the wandering looters,
Kept the crowd back and the road clear,
Got the women and the children
On the waiting motor lorries,
Packed them off to refugee camps ;
And their hardest job of all was
Parting one old Turkish lady

From the frowsty feather mattress
That they couldn't load up with her
On the overflowing lorry.
When the fire had reached their corner
They would move on to the next one,
Like a pair of organ grinders
Made to move on by a footman,
Giving ground, but giving slowly,
Fighting out a rearguard action.
And at every other corner
Of the doomed and burning city
Slaved the likes of Tiadatha,
Officers and private soldiers,
Fighting fire instead of Bulgars.
Many parts they played that evening,
Fireman, policeman, knight and coolie,
Till their eyes were red and burning,
Choc-a-bloc with grit and cinders,
Till their clothes were scorched and blackened,
Till their heads and feet and backs ached.
And that night my Tiadatha
Saw some sights not good to look on.
Many thousand hearts were broken,
Many thousand people homeless.

As the night wore on a damsel,
Tearful and quite unattractive,
Came beseeching Tiadatha,

Begged and prayed him come and help
her,
Help her save some cherished treasures.
Up some burning stairs she led them
(Having roped in Percy also),
Pointed to a clock and mirror,
Hideous both and very heavy.
Quick as lightning Tiadatha
Pounced upon the gilt-framed mirror
(Since it looked a little lighter),
Left the massive clock for Percy ;
Down the stairs they crashed together,
In their arms these precious treasures
Of this unattractive damsel.
Out into the street they lugged them,
Put them down upon the pavement,
But she begged and prayed them follow
Whither she had left her mother
And the rest of her belongings.
So they left their job and followed,
Followed like Quixotic idiots,
Staggered with the clock and mirror,
Which became extremely heavy ;
Through the burning streets they tottered,
Past the weeping homeless outcasts,
With the things upon their shoulders ;
Humped them till their backs were breaking,
Till at last their souls revolted.

“Finish, Mademoiselle,” said Percy,
Firm, though quite polite about it,
“Not another yard,” said Percy,
“Not a step,” said Tiadatha.
“*Pas loin d'ici*,” sobbed the maiden,
Wept the unattractive damsel,
“Only just a little farther,
Just a very little farther.”
On they went like two knight-errants
Out to serve their lovely lady,
Till they reached the bit of garden
That surrounds the old White Tower.
There they found the maiden’s mother,
Found her doddering old father,
Felt most awfully sorry for them,
Sorry they could do so little;
Sheepishly received their blessing,
Dumped the clock and dumped the mirror,
Feeling very much like Sinbad
When at last he’d dumped the old man
Who had ridden on his shoulders.
“Nearly five,” said Tiadatha,
“And the dawn will soon be breaking.
Percy, I am sick and weary,
And my eyes are full of cinders,
And my tongue as dry as Aden—
What about a rest, old sportsman?”
As he spoke he cast about him

For a haven, for a refuge,
Spied a T.B. in the harbour,
Hailed the captain through the darkness.
Came the answer through the darkness,
" Come aboard and have some whisky,
Come aboard, I'll send a boat off."

Percy and my Tiadatha
Soon were settled in the T.B.,
Drank the Captain's old Scotch whisky,
Munched his sandwiches and biscuits,
Murmured as they drank together,
" When in trouble, try the Navy,
Bless their souls, the British Navy !
Then they watched the fire raging,
Watched it burning from the harbour,
Tossing like a fiery ocean ;
Watched the shops and cafés blazing
All along the stricken sea-front,
Watched a flame that leapt to Heaven
Writhing like a dancing Dervish,
Watched a minaret uprising
White against the molten background,
And bethought them of the watches
They had taken for repairing,
Made some rueful calculations
Of the cost of seven new ones.

As the dawn came, Tiadatha,
Cheered to see the M.T. engine
Save the English Quay from ruin,
Gazed on ravaged Salonica
With its blackened, gutted buildings,
Thought of cheery times he'd spent there,
Thought of many noisy evenings,
Murmured "No more teas at Floca's,
No more shopping at Orosdi's,
No more dinners at the Splendide,
No more revels at the Odeon."
Murmured "Poor old Salonica,
Dear old dirty Salonica,
Salonica, finish Johnny."

CHAPTER XV

SNEVCE WAY

SOME days after Salonica
Had been burnt and devastated,
Tiadatha and the Dudshires
Trekked across the hills to Snevce,
To the Doya Tepe sector.
Settled in Popovo village
In the ruins of Surlovo,
Giving thanks to the Italians
For the huts they'd left behind them,
Huts with well-planked walls and ceilings,
Roofed with red tiles from the village,
Fitted out with chairs and tables,
Beds and doors and real glass windows.
Very restful, very soothing,
After the eternal sandbags
And the corrugated iron
Of the dug-outs they'd been used to—
Just like moving to the Carlton
Out of rather third-rate lodgings.

Very soon my Tiadatha,
Now become a swanking captain,
Found the Doya Tepe sector
Was indeed the silver lining
To the cloud of Macedonia,
And one clear September morning,
On a hill above Popovo,
High above Popovo village,
Gazed upon the scene before him,
Thought it very good to look on.

Down below along the foothills,
Ran the line of Dudshire trenches,
And the wire wound like a ribbon,
Like a long brown crinkled ribbon,
Up and down the wooded hillsides,
Up and down the wooded gullies.
There was blue smoke curling upwards
From a company headquarters,
And he saw some soldiers bathing
In a pool beside the village—
From below the voices reached him,
Clear as bells their voices reached him
In the honey-coloured sunshine.
And beyond the line of trenches,
Just beyond the wooded foothills
Lay the smiling open valley,
Varied as a landscape target,

Threaded by the Hodza Suju,
By the sandy Hodza river,
Bright as mackerel in the sunshine,
Brighter than a string of opals ;
White against the emerald background,
Ruined villages were dotted
With their vineyards and their orchards :
Brest and Nikolic and Palmis,
Bulamac and Akindzali.
There were woods and shady copses
And a line of tidy poplars,
Here a mill with tangled creepers,
There a disused Turkish fountain,
And the long straight line of railway,
With a few old trucks upon it,
Where in happier days the trains ran
Up and down the Struma valley,
To and from Constantinople.

And five miles across the valley
Rose the Belashitza Mountains,
Rose the Beles grim and lofty,
Mighty boundary of Bulgaria.
And below along the foothills
Ran the trenches of the Bulgar,
While a little to the westward
Lay the great round Lake of Doiran,
Gleaming like a polished mirror.

It was very fair to look on,
Fair to gaze on from a distance,
Yet it struck a note of sadness
In the heart of Tiadatha.
Not a head of sheep or cattle
In that green and pleasant valley,
Not a single vineyard tended,
Not a single orchard tended,
Not a sign of habitation
In a single battered village,
Save sometimes the smoke uprising
From the cookhouse of an outpost.
Yet the scene was fair to look on,
Very like a landscape target,
And the Generals when they saw it
Crowed with joy and beamed with pleasure--
" What a place for open warfare,
What a place for raids ! " they chirruped,
Safely perched upon the hilltops.

Tiadatha sat and pondered,
Pondered long upon the hillside,
Heaved a sigh of satisfaction
When he thought that he was sitting
Well in view of all the Bulgars,
Knowing that they could not reach him
With their field-guns on the Beles.

As for fourteen months the Dudshires
Hadn't moved behind their field-guns
Save for concentrated training,
They were charmed with Doya Tepe,
Found it like the open country
After being in a tunnel.
Quite a pleasant spot for warfare,
Really rather like the Picnic,
Like the Salonica Picnic,
They had read of in the papers

Still they had their job of watching,
Watching for a raiding party,
Guarding all their miles of frontage,
Every night on sentry duty
Or patrolling in the valley,
Digging trenches in the daytime,
Or fatigues and wiring parties.
But the crumps were far less frequent
And the gunners far less busy,
And it really was a blessing
To walk upright in the open,
Caring not for pipsqueak merchants,
Caring not for hidden snipers.

Sometimes Captain Tiadatha
Rode along his front line trenches,

Spent a useful morning shooting
Half a mile beyond the trenches,
Brought down several brace of partridge
And a hare or two for dinner.
Soon too he became acquainted
With the small hotel at Snevce
(Foremost pub. in Macedonia),
Where the food was quite delightful
And the liquor even better;
Where he spent some pleasant evenings
Very cheery, noisy evenings,
With a band of rowdy cronies
From his own and other units.
Soon he found his way to Kukus
(Having made some generous allies
Who owned kite balloons and tenders),
To that quaint and dirty village,
Rising phoenix-like from ruins,
Learnt the Greek for eggs was *avgα*,
Haggled with the Kukus robbers
For a melon or a cabbage,
Or an oke of tomatoes,
Bought some mats or bits of copper.
Watched the local comitadji,
With their lady wives and daughters,
In the glory of their war-paint,
In their native Balkan costume,
All the colours of the rainbow,

Riding in upon their donkeys,
On their clumsy bullock wagons,
Bringing in their goods to market.

Thus the summer slipped to autumn,
Thus the autumn turned to winter,
And the winter found the Dudshires
Still in Doya Tepe sector.
And their days rolled on as usual,
Varied by a free excursion,
By a morning raiding party,
To "maintain offensive spirit."
And they got up sports and concerts,
Keeping for the most part cheerful ;
Yet for all their songs and laughter,
In each heart there lay a shadow,
And in mess and hut and cookhouse,
In the transport lines and trenches,
Talk turned ever on one topic—
When they'd get their leave to Blighty,
How they'd spend it when they got it.
And they passed the weary weeks by,
Officers and private soldiers,
Sighing for the leave they wanted,
Leave that was so long in coming,
Sighing that it came no nearer.
Day and night they talked about it,
Had one theme of conversation,

And that solitary topic
Ran through all their conversation,
Like a pattern through a fabric,
A leit motif through an opera—
When they'd get their leave to Blighty,
How they'd spend their leave to Blighty.

CHESTER,

July 1918.

CHAPTER XVI

A STUNT AT DAWN

IN the month of bleak November
Said the Colonel of the Dudshires,
Heart athirst for blood and battle,
“ We must have another outing,
Do another stunt one morning,
Raid that wood across the valley,
Twist the Bulgars’ tails a little,
Bring some prisoners back to breakfast.”

Picture then my Tiadatha
Sitting in his draughty dug-out
At one-thirty in the morning,
Gulping tea and crunching bacon
In an effort at a breakfast ;
Picture him in Tommy’s tunic,
Very oldest boots and breeches,
Girt with rifle and equipment
Kindly lent him for the occasion
By his Quartermaster-Sergeant,
Feeling rather apprehensive,

Feeling very far from happy,
As he'd often felt on Sports days
Ere he'd started for the hurdles.

To the fountain in the village,
In the little ruined village,
Came the Dudshire raiding party
And assembled in the starlight.
Through the wire they wound in silence
Like a mighty caterpillar
(Silent save for Tiadatha
Strafing someone else for talking),
Bayonets gleaming in the starlight,
Water-bottles gurgling softly
As they clumped along the pathway,
Clumped along towards Hodza River ;
At the ford they crossed the river
Splashing like a hippo bathing,
Gasping as it reached their tummies ;
But it did not damp their ardour,
Damped their feet but not their ardour,
And they staggered on in silence
Now well into Bulgar country.

As they skirted round an outpost
Tiadatha's heart grew fearful
Of inevitable star-shells,
Very lights that seemed as certain

As a howl is from a baby
When he wakes up in the night-time :
Felt his heart go pitter-patter,
Knowing well how all depended
On their getting past unnoticed ;
But because a gale was blowing,
Or because the group was dreaming
Of its fairies in Sofia,
Not a sound came from the outpost,
Not a rifle shot nor star-shell
While the vanguard of the Dudshires
Led the party through the darkness
As a tug escorts a liner.

Drawing near their dim objective
In the greyness of the morning,
They deployed and at the signal,
At the order of their Colonel,
Charged upon the Bulgar stronghold
As the pearly dawn was breaking.

'Twould have made your heart beat faster,
'Twould have set your blood a-tingle,
Had you seen the Royal Dudshires,
Seen that line of gallant Dudshires,
Shake itself and charge like soldiers,
Go bald-headed for the Bulgars.
Had you heard the Dudshires yelling

Loud as rooters at a ball game
When they charged across the open,
In their hearts that funny feeling,
Only brought about by three things—
Love or rum or lust of battle.

And by this time Johnny Bulgar
Was awake and taking notice,
Sitting up and taking notice,
Potting at the charging Dudshires
As they came across the open.
From behind the trees they potted,
Potted from behind the bushes,
Made the puddles look like fountains
In the greyness of the morning.
But the Dudshires, nothing daunted,
Kept their line and never wavered,
At their head my Tiadatha.
Closer still they came and closer
Till the Bulgars saw their bayonets
Gleaming silver in the morning,
Found that they could wait no longer,
Through the wood they turned and legged it,
On their heels the panting Dudshires
Led by breathless Tiadatha.

You'd have cheered your very soul out
Had you spotted Tiadatha

Rounding up a band of prisoners,
Setting off with Woggs his batman
On a separate expedition
After one more pet of Ferdie's
Who was hurriedly departing.
Hard and fast he chased that Bulgar,
Vainly loosing off his rifle
(Finding that it wasn't loaded),
Vainly trying to remember
What "Surrender" was in Bulgar.
Wind was weak though spirit willing
And he never caught his quarry,
For in spite of his equipment,
Fancy boots and overcoating,
Johnny legged it like a good 'un,
Faster than a fighting woodcock,
Swifter than a homing pigeon,
Leaving Woggs and Tiadatha
Cursing loudly in the distance,
With the slender consolation
That they'd bagged a Bulgar rifle
As memento of the picnic.

Thus they got their job of work done,
Cleared the wood of Johnny Bulgar,
Picked up all he'd left behind him,
Even to his bits of breakfast,
And beheld with satisfaction

(Crumps were getting rather busy)
Three red lights go soaring upwards,
Signal for them all to hop it.

Then without unseemly hurry,
Turkish cigarette in one hand
And a biscuit in the other,
Having passed his irksome rifle
On to Woggs the ever-suffering,
Tiadatha led his party
Back across the open country,
Led them back across the river
While the zealous German gunners
Sprinkled all the plain with shrapnel,
Heaved a pious thanks to get them
Back into the lines of safety.
Back in safety with their tails up,
Spent a pleasant twenty minutes
Watching prisoner birds arriving,
Dribbling back in pairs and bunches.
One especially he noticed,
Tunic destitute of buttons
As a ration joint of suet
(Gone as souvenirs to Dudshire),
Who yet clutched a set of buttons,
Set of universal buttons,
Given to him as exchanges
By his cheerful Dudshire captors.

Pockets bulging fat with Woodbines,
Woodbines that in Balkan trenches
Are as scarce as lumps of sugar
On an English breakfast table,
Proof of Tommy's pleasant manners
Towards the cove he'd tried to scupper,
Done his very best to scupper
Early that November morning.

Then my gleeful Tiadatha
Bade Woggs go and fetch his Kodak,
Photographed the Bulgar prisoner,
Took him with the Sergeant-Major
And without the Sergeant-Major,
Cheered him up and pinched his cap badge
As a souvenir for Phyllis,
Gave him half a tin of bully.
Then he made a second breakfast,
Made a mighty second breakfast,
Strolled into his little dug-out
That he almost said good-bye to
When he left it in the morning,
Bathed and got the grime of war off,
Laid him down and slept till evening
As befitted a world's worker.

CHESTER,

July 1918.

— CHAPTER XVII

LEAVE TO ENGLAND

ON a certain winter's morning,
Early on in 1918,
Tiadatha had the tidings
Sudden as a tropic sunrise,
Unbelievable as winning
Something in a comic raffle,
That he'd got his leave to England ;
And although the snow was falling
On that Balkan winter's morning,
All the world seemed full of sunshine,
All the world seemed bright and golden,
And he felt as effervescent
As a fizzing glass of bubbly,
Felt as though a lovely fairy,
Ever cold and stony-hearted,
Finally had come and kissed him.

So my joyous Tiadatha
Made some frenzied preparations,

Got some odds and ends together,
Said good-bye to everybody,
Said good-bye to Woggs his batman,
Trusty Woggs the ever-ready,
Wishing he was coming also,
Wishing everyone was coming.
Started on that blessed journey,
On that wonderful adventure,
"To proceed on leave to England,"
And one grey and misty morning
Steamed away from Salonica
From Constantinople station
With some other lucky blighters.

And it didn't seem to matter
That the carriage floor was filthy,
That the seats were void of cushions,
That the window glass was broken.
It was quite enough to know that
They were leaving Salonica,
Quaint old dirty Salonica,
And the mud of Macedonia
And the everlasting hillsides,
After what seemed countless ages—
Quite enough for Tiadatha
To see Salonica fading,
Growing fainter in the distance.

All day long the leave train jolted,
All night long it rocked and jolted,
Crawling on through Greece to Bralo,
Halting only at Larissa.
And the R.T.O., Larissa,
Very kind and very courteous,
Welcomed Tiadatha's party,
Took them over to his billet,
Gave them steaming tea at midnight,
Like the whitest brand of white man.
Then at seven in the morning
They detrained at Bralo station,
Bleary-eyed, unshaved and grimy.
Went by lorry to the Rest Camp,
Bathed and shaved and had some breakfast,
Felt just like a piece of silver
When it's made to shine with Goddard's
After being badly tarnished.

On they went from Bralo Rest Camp,
On they went by motor lorry
Up the road across the mountains,
Up the road that twirled and twisted
Like a pirouetting dancer.
As they reached the mountain summit,
Started downwards to Itea,
Very lovely was the picture

Spread before my Tiadatha.
Rugged hills and deep-cleft valleys,
Here and there a golden village,
Far below, the olive gardens,
And beyond them, blue as turquoise,
Lay the sunny Gulf of Corinth.
And all Tiadatha's comrades
Murmured "Oh, by Jove, how lovely!"
"Take it all," said Tiadatha,
"Take it all and more beside it.
I would give you every mountain,
Every olive grove and village,
And the whole damn Gulf of Corinth,
For a glimpse of England's coastline,
For a glimpse of Piccadilly."

Soon they reached Itea village,
Put up at the local Rest Camp,
At the ever-present Rest Camp.
Spent three warm and sunny days there,
And my happy Tiadatha
Quickly found a kindred spirit,
Found a red tabbed gunner captain,
Wandered with him round the village
That lay sleepy in the sunlight,
Yet awake to pouch the drachmae
Of the passing British soldier.
And they rowed out to an island,

Lay and watched the sea for ages
Underneath a cloudless heaven,
With a pleasant sense of freedom,
Sense of having slipped the handcuffs
Of the army for a little.
Did a bit of tripperising,
Went to see the sights of Delphi,
Delphi in its ancient splendour,
In the ruins of its splendour,
Standing high upon the hillside,
Looking on the Gulf of Corinth.
Wandered round and saw the Oracle,
Wandered round and saw the Stadium,
Where of old the Greeks ran races ;
Toed the mark and ran a hundred,
To the wonder of some Frenchmen,
Who were also tripperising.

Then one afternoon the leave boat
Steamed into the tiny harbour,
And at dawn the morning after
Bore rejoicing Tiadatha
And his party off to Taranto.
Every time the steamer's screw turned,
Every single knot she covered,
Tiadatha felt his heart thrill,
Felt his England drawing nearer,
Felt St. James's drawing nearer,

And the things he loved so well there.
And they dodged the lurking U-boats
That were hanging round like footpads,
Came to anchor at Taranto,
In Taranto's crowded harbour,
Where the seaplanes skim like seagulls
O'er the surface of the water.
Disembarked and found the Rest Camp,
Yet another Army Rest Camp,
Sumptuous to Tiadatha
After those of Macedonia,
Which had usually consisted
Of a dozen flapping bell tents,
Pitched upon a windy hillside.

And they found Taranto crowded,
Crawling with expensive Generals
Waiting for their turn with others.
Vanished were their hopes of Rapide,
Hopes of going on by Rapide,
Seeing Rome and seeing Paris.
"Never mind," said Tiadatha,
To the red-tabbed gunner captain,
"Every day we hang about here,
Every day the journey's lengthened,
Means a day of warfare over,
Means the end a little nearer."
So they sojourned at the Rest Camp,

Loafed about and wrote some letters,
Patronised the bar when open,
Quaffing Bass again with gusto,
And at six o'clock one evening
Started on the daily troop train,
Started on their journey Northwards.

Very wisely Tiadatha
And his friend the gunner captain
Went and bagged a carriage early,
Went and bagged a first-class carriage
That had still some cushions in it
And some glass left in the windows,
Chalked up "Captain Tiadatha
And three officers" upon it,
Got two merchants who were going
One night only on the journey,
After which they shared the carriage
Tiadatha and the gunner.

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Early every day they halted,
Washed in buckets by the trainside,
Shaved and strolled about a little,
Sometimes snatched a hurried breakfast
At the buffet of a station.
Spent the long, long days in reading,
Pulling mutual friends to pieces,
Talking over raids and battles,

Talking over all their leave plans,
Ate their very sketchy luncheons,
Ate their very uncouth dinners,
Cleaned their plates with bits of paper,
Cleaned their knives and forks with paper,
Living in acute discomfort,
Pigging as they'd seldom pigged it,
Turning out sometimes at Rest Camps
Just to stretch their legs a little,
Have a bath and get some dinner.
Every night they got a fug up,
Got a most uncommon fug up,
Boarded up the broken windows,
Lighted quite a dozen candles.
All along the rack they stuck them,
Stuck them on the greasy arm-rests,
Got the carriage warm and cosy,
Then unrolled their fat valises,
Slept beneath a pile of blankets
Soundly as a pair of kittens.
Thus nine days and nights they travelled,
All through Italy they travelled,
Found at Havre their troopship waiting,
Sailed at dusk upon the troopship,
Sailed all night without adventure.

As the dawn broke Tiadatha
Saw the coast of England rising

Through the misty winter's morning,
Felt his heart go beating wildly
As when lover meets his mistress,
Longed to kiss his lovely England,
Take her in his arms and kiss her,
As a son might kiss his mother.
Got ashore and humped his kit off,
Then went streaking up to London
Making for his loved St. James's.

- B.E.F., FRANCE,
August 1918.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME AT LAST

WATERLOO the same as ever
With its old familiar noises,
Hustle, bustle and excitement,
Hurrying feet and anxious faces,
People staggering with parcels,
People pushing for their luggage,
And the whistling of the engines,
And the rattling of the milk cans,
And the shouting of the newsboys—
Thus it greeted Tiadatha
Very much the same as ever,
Though he found a dearth of porters,
Found it hard to get a porter,
Harder still to get a taxi.

Who can tell of that first journey,
That first taxi drive in London,
Of the exile from the trenches,
Of the wanderer returning—
Almost every street and building

Bringing back a recollection
Like a long-forgotten perfume ?

As a soldier to the canteen
After his parade is over,
Even so sped Tiadatha
Straightway to his club in Pall Mall.
And the porter in the hallway,
White and very old retainer,
Imperturbable as marble,
Changeless as a ration biscuit,
Gave his usual morning greeting
Just as if it were but two days
Since he'd seen my Tiadatha,
Not two weary years and over.
And it seemed to Tiadatha
That somehow the porter's greeting
Bridged those weary years of exile,
Helped him pick the threads of life up,
Feel he'd been away but two days
Not two weary years and over.

After lunch he doffed his khaki,
Dived into a suit of mufti,
Felt his leave had really started
As he sauntered to St. James's,
Bound for Jermyn Street and Hammam's.
Had a Turkish bath at Hammam's,

Came out feeling clean and happy,
Spotless as a British cruiser
On a sunny Sunday morning,
Fresh as any London pavement
After summer rains have washed it,
Hair well brushed and very sleeky.
Hat at just the proper angle,
Suit of grey and gloves of buckskin,
Socks as soothing as a moonbeam,
And a tie of Dudshire colours.

And the sights and smells of London
All seemed good to Tiadatha,
Every shop he saw allured him,
Every face he passed was lovely.
So he wandered for a little
And inhaled his well-loved London,
Let it steal upon his senses
As a Chinaman with hashish.

“ Life again ” thought Tiadatha,
Rumpelmeyer’s instead of Floca’s,
Hammam’s baths instead of Botton’s,
And the Club instead of Rest Camps.
For three little weeks I’ve got them,
Swapped the Skating Rink for Murray’s
Swapped the Tour Blanche for the Empire.
Swapped the Luxe Hotel for Carlton,

And the shops of Rue Egnatia
For the Burlington and Bond Street,
And old Salonica's cobbles
For the pavement of St. James's.

Then he hied him to his tailor
(Who was very pleased to see him),
Tried on slacks and tried on tunics
And a pair of wondrous breeches,
And a pleasant suit of mufti
That were ready waiting for him.
Then to Mr. Wing he hastened,
Mr. Wing of Piccadilly
(Who was just as pleased to see him),
Rioted in ties and hankies,
Shirts and gloves and silk pyjamas,
Socks of many shades and colours,
Put the whole lot down to Father,
Recking little of the future.

After that he hailed a taxi,
Bade the driver make for Sloane Street
And the home of green-eyed Phyllis;
Found his heart was beating faster
Than a Lewis gun in action
As he knocked upon the front door.

She was still the same as ever,
Tiadatha's green-eyed Phyllis,
Still as sweet and slim and slender,
Slim and slender as his sword was.
And her eyes were still like April,
Green and grey as days in April,
And her mouth still curved like roses,
And her smile was still like sunshine
Playing on the Thames at Chelsea
Early on a summer morning.
Still the same yet somehow different,
Somehow deeper, somehow truer,
Tested by those years of waiting,
By those two long years of waiting,
Less of girl and more of woman,
And her eyes were very tender
As she kissed my Tiadatha.

And that night they dined at Prince's,
Tiadatha very happy
Sitting at his wonted table
In black tie and dinner jacket,
Gleaming shirt and glossy collar;
Phyllis radiant, very lovely,
In a frock of grey and silver,
Soft and clinging as a shadow,
Pearly as the mists of morning,
Touched with violet like a sunrise

(Who am I to tell you of it?)
With some tiny silver tassels
Hanging down like shafts of moonlight.
And her eyes like stars were shining,
Like stars on a frosty evening,
As she talked to Tiadatha.

And the glinting dinner table
And the shaded lights and music,
And the buzz of conversation
Of the gay and laughing people
Were like wine to Tiadatha.
And he raised his glass of bubbly
Looking towards his green-eyed Phyllis.
"Here's a toast," quoth Tiadatha,
"Here's to the two things I love
most—
London Town in peace and war time,
Coupled with the name of Phyllis.
This is better than the Splendide,
This is better than the French Club,
Better than a farewell dinner
In a dug-out in the trenches,
London Town in peace and war time,
Nothing in the world to touch you—
Damn the air-raids, damn the coupons,
Damn the lack of meat and sugar.
Two long years I've waited for you,

After two long years I've got you,
London and my green-eyed Phyllis.

So they lingered over dinner
As a lover reads a letter
Lest the end should come too quickly.
Then he bore her to the Gaiety,
And the joyous Tiadatha
In his comfy green stall nestling,
Hooted with infectious laughter
Like a schoolboy at a panto,
Clapped the songs and jokes and dances
As he'd never done in peace time.
Happy still when it was over,
Thinking of the dance and Murray's—
Sped there in a wangled taxi,
All too soon fetched up at Murray's.
Murray's just the same as ever,
Murray's with the same old fug up,
Like an aggravated hothouse,
Just the same appalling prices
For a jug of Murray's Mixture.
Many well-remembered faces
Round the little close-packed tables
With their many-coloured night-lights.
Same old floor that gleamed like honey,
Same old priceless band of niggers

Playing rag-time, playing fox-trots
As no other band could play them.

And they danced and danced together,
Phyllis and my Tiadatha,
As upon that summer evening
When at first they met each other—
Till the nigger band departed,
Till the waiters all grew restive,
Phyllis danced with Tiadatha.

Happy days are short as kisses
Snatched when someone else is coming,
Happy days end always quickly
But in war time even quicker
Than they used to do in peace time.
Bitterly my Tiadatha
Cursed the fate that sent him homewards
Ere the pearly dawn was breaking,
Ere the workmen's trains were running.
But he knew Fate is remorseless,
Knew that Dora is remorseless
As the chucker out at Murray's.
So by dint of shoving, pushing,
Begging, bribing and cajoling,
He induced a taxi-driver,
Most elusive, very lordly,

To unbend enough to take them
(At a price) as far as Sloane Street.

In that hard-won London taxi,
Speeding down dim Piccadilly
On its way to darkened Sloane Street
I will leave my Tiadatha
On his first sweet night in England—
Leave him feeling very happy,
Drugged with a divine contentment,
Feeling life was paying interest
On the days he had invested
In those dreary Balkan trenches.
Leave him with the things he'd ached for
In those two long years of exile,
Leave him to his well-loved London
And the arms of green-eyed Phyllis.

* * * * *

Should you question, should you ask me
What became of Tiadatha;
Ask me if he married Phyllis,
If he found another fairy,
Found one even more alluring,
Eyes of brown or blue or violet;
If he sailed for Salonica
Still an unrepentant bachelor;
Should you ask me of his doings

After those three weeks were ended,
One mad rush and wild excitement ;
If he got a cushy staff job
With a lot of tabs about it,
Or if he became a major
Or the Colonel of the Dudshires,
I should make reply and answer—
“ Who am I that I should tell you ?
I have brought my Tiadatha
Back again to where he started
(Just as if he had been travelling
On a kind of Inner Circle),
Safe and sound and still light-hearted,
Still the same yet somehow different.
You remember how I found him
In July of 1914
Toying with his devilled kidneys
At his little flat in Duke Street ;
Very tired and very nut-like,
What we used to call a “ filbert.”
I have told you of his training,
I have told you of his troubles,
Of his trials and his travels,
Of some happenings that befell him.
I have tried to picture to you
How he lived and laughed and battled
Out in France and Salonica,
How he changed from nut to soldier

As a sword is tried and tempered
When it passes through the furnace,
How he learnt (with many like him)
Something of the things that matter,
Life and Death and high endeavour.
How he learnt (with many like him)
That you cannot love your country
Till you've left it far behind you
(Just as no one loved his sugar
Till the beastly stuff was rationed);
That you cannot know its pleasures,
Cannot love its charms and comforts,
Till you've sampled several others.

“ In this war the Hun has brought us,
Some have learnt to make returns out,
Some have learnt to write out orders.
Some have learnt the way to kill Huns,
Some to lead the men that kill them,
Some have learnt to cope with bully,
Learnt to shave with army razors,
Learnt to make the best of blizzards,
Mud and slush and blazing sunshine,
Learnt to coax a little comfort
Out of bivvies, barns and dug-outs,
Learnt of things they never dreamed of
In July of 1914.

" And they all have learnt this lesson,
Learnt as well this common lesson,
Learnt to hold a little dearer
All the things they took for granted
In July of 1914—
Whether it be Scottish Highlands,
Hills of Wales or banks of Ireland,
Or the swelling downs of Dudshire,
Or the pavement of St. James's—
Even so my Tiadatha.

" So I leave him and salute him
Back in his beloved London,
Knowing that the war has one thing
(If no others) to its credit—
It has made a nut a soldier,
Made a silk purse from a sow's ear,
Made a man of Tiadatha
And made men of hundreds like him.

" And the world has cause to thank us
For that band of so-called filberts,
For those products of St. James's,
Light of heart and much enduring,
Straight and debonair and dauntless,
Grousing at their small discomforts,
Smiling in the face of danger.

Who have faced their great adventure,
Crossed through No Man's Land to meet it,
Lightly as they'd cross St. James's.
Eyes and heart still full of laughter,
Till the world had cause to wonder,
Till the world had cause to thank us
For the likes of Tiadatha."

CENDRESSELLES.

September 1918

THE END

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